Harold Wilson, the USSR and British foreign and defence poicy in the context of East-West detente : 1964

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HAROLD WILSON, THE USSR AND BRITISH FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF EAST-WEST *DÉTENTE*: 1964-1968.

A thesis for PhD submitted

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ABSTRACT.

This thesis examines British policy towards the USSR from the Labour party's general election victory in October 1964 to the aftermath of the 'Prague Spring' and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (August 1968). It argues that the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, emulated his predecessors in seeking improved relations with the Soviet Union, while preserving alliance ties with the USA and NATO. In addition, Foreign Office officials examining the future of East-West relations concluded that in the long-term the Eastern bloc states would undergo a process of internal 'evolution', developing less doctrinaire and more liberal domestic policies.

This thesis concludes that British efforts to develop East-West *détente* in the late 1960s, like those of France and West Germany, suffered because of the effect of the Vietnam war on superpower relations, the Sino-Soviet split, internal problems within NATO and the pressures for internal reform in Eastern Europe, which culminated in the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968. The suppression of the pro-reform Czechoslovak government also showed that the Foreign Office's concept of 'evolution' did not take into account the hard-line conservatism of the Soviet regime and its East European clients. Despite Wilson's interest in Anglo-Soviet relations, particularly regarding East-West commerce, and a state visit by the Soviet Premier, Alexei Kosygin, in February 1967, bilateral relations were generally poor. Furthermore, in spite of the Prime Minister's belief that the UK could act as a 'go-between' facilitating contact between the superpowers, the British were excluded from US-Soviet arms control talks. British officials were dissatisfied by the manner in which Moscow had responded to London's efforts to improve bilateral relations, and by 1968 the majority of Foreign Office officials believed that the USSR had exploited Britain's eagerness for *détente*. Although the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia did not arouse any fears of a more aggressive Soviet foreign policy, it did little to alter the prevailing view in Whitehall that the main impediment to *détente* was the USSR's intransigence. This assessment set the tone for British policy towards East-West relations throughout the following decade.

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During my research trip to the United States in the autumn of 2000, the archivists of the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, and at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, assisted me with my research into contemporary US government documents. I would also like to thank the staffs at the National Security Archives at George Washington University and at the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center, both in Washington DC for their help.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Dr John Royston Hughes (1939-1991). '*Calon onest, calon lân*'.

CONTENTS.

ABBREVIATIONS AND FOREIGN WORDS USED IN THE TEXT.

ABM - Anti-Ballistic Missile system.
AMTORG - Russian acronym for the Soviet state agency for trade with the USA.
ANF - Atlantic Nuclear Force.
BAOR - British Army of the Rhine.
BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation.
Benelux - Generic name given to Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg following their customs union in 1947.
BoT - Board of Trade.
BRIXMIS - British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet forces in Germany, stationed in East Berlin.
Bundesrat - Upper house of West German Parliament.
Bundestag - Lower house of West German Parliament.
Bundeswehr - West German armed forces.
CAB - Cabinet Office (PRO).
CENTO - Central Treaty Organisation, consisting of the UK, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.
CDS - Chief of Defence Staff (COS).
CDU - Christian Democratic Party (FRG).
CIA - Central Intelligence Agency (USA).
CMEA - Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (also known as *Comecon*).
COCOM - Co-ordinating Committee (on strategic trade with Communist states).
COS - Chiefs of Staff.
CPSU - Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
CRO - Commonwealth Relations Office.
CTBT - Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
DCI - Director of Central Intelligence (USA).
DEA - Department of Economic Affairs.
DEFE - Ministry of Defence (PRO).
DIS - Defence Intelligence Staff (MoD).
DRV - Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
EEC - European Economic Community, consisting at this time of France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and the FRG.
EESD - East European and Soviet Department (name given to the former Northern Department when the FCO was established in October 1968).
FO - Foreign Office (PRO).
FCO - Foreign and Commonwealth Office, established after the amalgamation of the Foreign Office and CRO on 14 October 1968.
FRG - Federal Republic of Germany.
GCHQ - Government Communications Headquarters. The British SIGINT (signals intelligence) service.
GDR - German Democratic Republic.
GRU - Soviet military intelligence.

HMG - Her Majesty's Government.
ICBM - Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ranging from 3,000 to 8,000 nautical miles).
IRBM - Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (ranging from 1,500 to 3,000 nautical miles.
JCS - Joint Chiefs of Staff (USA).
JIC - Joint Intelligence Committee.
KGB - Russian initials for the Committee for State Security, the USSR's foreign intelligence and internal secret police force.
LTBT - Limited Test Ban Treaty.
LBJLIB - Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas.
Mintech - Ministry of Technology.
MI5 - The British domestic security service.
MLF - Multilateral Force.
MoD - Ministry of Defence.
MRBM - Medium Range Ballistic Missile (ranging from 600 to 1,500 nautical miles).
NAC - North Atlantic Council (NATO).
NARA - National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, consisting at this time of the USA, Canada, UK, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, the FRG, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Italy, Greece and Turkey. France left NATO's Military Command Structure in March 1966, while Iceland was never involved in the Alliance's military affairs.
ND - Northern Department (FO).
NIE - National Intelligence Estimate (USA).
NPT - Non-Proliferation Treaty.
NSAM - National Security Action Memorandum (USA).
NSC - National Security Council (USA).
OPD - Overseas Policy and Defence (Ministerial) Committee.
OPD(O) - Overseas Policy and Defence (Official) Committee.
PKI - Indonesian Communist Party.
PN - Cabinet Nuclear Policy Committee.
Politburo - CPSU leadership. Known as the *Presidium* before 1966.
PRC - People's Republic of China.
PREM - Prime Minister's Office (PRO).
PRO - Public Record Office.
PUSD - Permanent Under-Secretary's Department (FO).
SEAD - South-East Asia Department (FO).
SEATO - South-East Asia Treaty Organisation, consisting of the USA, UK, France, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand.
SIGINT - Signals Intelligence.
SIS - Secret Intelligence Service. The British foreign intelligence service.
SLBM - Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile.
SPD - Social Democratic Party (FRG).
StB - The Czechoslovak foreign intelligence / secret police force.

Tass - Russian acronym for the Soviet official news agency.
UKDelNATO - UK delegation to NATO.
UN - United Nations.
UNEF - United Nations Emergency Force. The UN peace-keeping force deployed along the Suez canal from 1956 to 1967.
WEU - Western European Union, consisting of the UK, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, the FRG and Italy.
WTO - Warsaw Treaty Organisation (Warsaw Pact), consisting of the USSR, Poland, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and (until 1968) Albania.

PRINCIPAL POLITICIANS AND OFFICIALS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT, 1964-1969.

Yuri Andropov (USSR) - Chairman of KGB (from April 1967).
George Ball (USA) - Under-Secretary of State (until September 1966).
Tony Benn (UK) - Minister of Technology (June 1966-June 1970).
William Barker (UK) - Her Majesty's Ambassador to Prague (from December 1966).
McGeorge Bundy (USA) - National security advisor to President Johnson (until February 1966).
Willy Brandt (FRG) - West German Foreign Minister (from November 1966).
Leonid Brezhnev (USSR) - First Secretary of CPSU (from October 1964).
Thomas Brimelow (UK) - Minister at Moscow embassy (September 1966), then HM Ambassador to Warsaw.
George Brown (UK) - First Secretary of DEA (October 1964-August 1966). Foreign Secretary (August 1966-March 1968).
Josip Broz (Marshal Tito) (Yugoslavia) - Yugoslav President.
David Bruce (USA) - American Ambassador to London (until March 1969).
Bernard Burrows (UK) - Chairman of JIC (until September 1966), then head of UK delegation to NATO.
James Callaghan (UK) - Chancellor of the Exchequer (October 1964-November 1967). Home Secretary (November 1967-June 1970).
Barbara Castle (UK) - Left-wing Minister and political ally of Harold Wilson.
Nicolae Ceausescu (Romania) - Secretary of Romanian Communist Party (from March 1965).
Oldrich Cernik (Czechoslovakia) - Czechoslovak Premier (January 1968-January 1970).
Chen Yi (PRC) - Chinese Foreign Minister (until August 1967).
Harlan Cleveland (USA) - Head of US delegation to NATO (from September 1965).
Clark Clifford (USA) - Secretary for Defense (from February 1968).
George Clutton (UK) - HM Ambassador to Warsaw (until September 1966).
Chester Cooper (USA) - NSC official and subordinate of Averell Harriman.
Anthony Crosland (UK) - President of the Board of Trade (from August 1967).
Richard Crossman (UK) - Left-wing Minister and political ally of Harold Wilson.
Patrick Dean (UK) - HM Ambassador to Washington (from April 1965).
Anatolii Dobrynin (USSR) - Soviet Ambassador to Washington.
Alec Douglas-Home (UK) - Prime Minister (October 1963-October 1964).
Alexander Dubcek (Czechoslovakia) - First Secretary of the CPCS (January 1968-April 1969).
Ludwig Erhard (FRG) - West German Chancellor (until November 1966).
Charles de Gaulle (France) - French President (until April 1969).
Wladyslaw Gomulka (Poland) - First Secretary of Polish Communist Party.
Patrick Gordon-Walker (UK) - Foreign Secretary (October 1964-January 1965).
Paul Gore-Booth (UK) - Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office

(January 1965-February 1969).

Denis Greenhill (UK) - Chairman of JIC (September 1966-February 1969). Then Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office.

Andrei Gromyko (USSR) - Soviet Foreign Minister.

Lord Harlech (UK) - HM Ambassador to Washington (until April 1965).

Pierre Harmel (Belgium) - Belgian Foreign Minister (from February 1966).

Averell Harriman (USA) - Ambassador at Large responsible for overseeing Vietnam peace proposals.

Geoffrey Harrison (UK) - HM Ambassador to Moscow (August 1965-August 1968).

Denis Healey (UK) - Secretary for Defence (October 1964-June 1970).

Ho Chi Minh (DRV) - President of North Vietnam.

Gunnar Jarring (Sweden) - UN Special Representative for the Middle East.

Lyndon Johnson (USA) - President of the United States (until January 1969).

Janos Kadar (Hungary) - First Secretary of Hungarian Communist Party.

Nikita Khrushchev (USSR) - First Secretary of CPSU & Soviet premier (until October 1964).

Kurt Kiesinger (FRG) - West German Chancellor (from November 1966).

Henry Kissinger (USA) - National Security Advisor to President Nixon (from January 1969).

Foy Kohler (USA) - American Ambassador to Moscow (until November 1966). Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs (November 1966-December 1967).

Alexei Kosygin (USSR) - Soviet Premier (from October 1964).

Mao Zedong (PRC) - Chairman of Chinese Communist Party.

Robert McNamara (USA) - Secretary of Defense (until February 1968).

Admiral Lord Mountbatten (UK) - Chief of Defence Staff (until July 1965).

Gamal Abdul Nasser (Egypt) - Egyptian President.

Richard Nixon (USA) - President of the United States (from January 1969).

Antonin Novotny (Czechoslovakia) - First Secretary of the CPCS and Czechoslovak President (until January 1968).

Michael Palliser (UK) - Private Secretary to the PM (from April 1966).

Cecil Parrott (UK) - HM Ambassador to Prague (until December 1966).

Pham Van Dong (DRV) - Prime Minister of North Vietnam.

Dmitrii Polyanskii (USSR) - Soviet Deputy Premier (from October 1964).

Adam Rapacki (Poland) - Polish Foreign Minister (until April 1968).

Frank Roberts (UK) - HM Ambassador to Bonn (February 1963-October 1968).

Walt Rostow (USA) - National security advisor to President Johnson (from April 1966).

Dean Rusk (USA) - Secretary of State.

Gerhard Schröder (FRG) - West German Foreign Minister (until November 1966).

Lal Bahadur Shastri - Prime Minister of India (until January 1966).

Pyotr (Petro) Shelest (USSR) - Secretary of Ukrainian Communist Party.

Alexander Shelepin (USSR) - *Politburo* member and former KGB Chairman.

Evelyn Shuckburgh (UK) - Head of UK Delegation to NATO (until September 1966). Then HM Ambassador to Rome.
Prince Norodom Sihanouk (Cambodia) - Cambodian sovereign.
Mikhail Smirnovsky (USSR) - Soviet Ambassador to London (from January 1966).
Howard Smith (UK) - Head of Northern Department, Foreign Office (until January 1969).
Aleksandr Soldatov (USSR) - Soviet Ambassador to London (until January 1966).
Ahmed Sukarno (Indonesia) - Indonesian President (until March 1967).
Mikhail Suslov (USSR) - *Politburo* member and ideological head of CPSU.
Michael Stewart (UK) - Foreign Secretary (January 1965-August 1966, & March 1968-June 1970).
Llewelyn Thompson (USA) - American Ambassador to Moscow (from December 1966).
Burke Trend (UK) - Cabinet Secretary.
Humphrey Trevelyan (UK) - HM Ambassador to Moscow (until July 1965).
Duncan Wilson (UK) - HM Ambassador to Belgrade (September 1964 -October. 1968). Then Ambassador to Moscow.
Harold Wilson (UK) - Prime Minister (October 1964-June 1970).
Oliver Wright (UK) - Private Secretary to the PM (until April 1966).
Todor Zhivkov (Bulgaria) - First Secretary of Bulgarian Communist Party.
Solly Zuckerman (UK) - Chief Scientific Advisor to HMG.

INTRODUCTION.

Until two decades ago, studies of the Cold War tended to focus almost exclusively on the bipolar power struggle between the two superpowers, overlooking the roles of smaller states. Since 1991, our knowledge and understanding of the perspectives and policies of not only the USSR, but China and other Communist powers has been significantly enhanced, and this thesis includes the findings of recent studies on Soviet, Chinese and Eastern bloc archives.[1] While this research has helped historians to comprehend how East-West crises and developments were perceived on 'the other side of the hill', there are still significant gaps in Cold War historiography as far as the 'Western' powers are concerned, one example being British policy towards East-West relations from the mid-1960s onwards.

Studies of Britain's post-war foreign policy tended to focus on the UK's decline from great power status and on Anglo-American relations,[2] but in the past two decades historians have written extensively on British policy towards the Cold War from the collapse of the wartime 'Grand Alliance' to the Cuban Missile Crisis.[3] However, due principally to the 'Thirty Year Rule' governing the

[1] These include the research bulletins and papers produced since 1992 by scholars associated with the Cold War International History Project (CWIHP - http://cwihp.si.edu), not to mention the research conducted by the National Security Archive in George Washington University, Washington DC (http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv), and the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/).
[2] See 'Britain and the Cold War. The forgotten war' in *The Economist*, 13.11.99, p.46.
[3] See, for instance, M. Kitchen, *British policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War*, (London; Macmillan 1998). M. Folly, *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union 1940-45*, (Macmillan 2000). A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin. Foreign Secretary 1945-1951*, (Oxford University Press 1985). R. J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand. Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence*, (London; John Murray 2001). J. Young, *Winston Churchill's Last Campaign*, (Oxford; Clarendon Press 1996). S. Dockrill, *Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament,*

declassification of government documents, there is little if any material covering Britain's approach to East-West relations after 1964.[4] It is only since 1995 that archival material from Harold Wilson's first term as Prime Minister (1964-1970) has been made available to researchers. As a consequence, historians are aware of Charles de Gaulle's emphasis on improved Franco-Soviet relations, and the development of West Germany's policy of *Ostpolitik* during the late 1960s-early 1970s, but British policy towards *détente* has generally been overlooked.[5] The publication of three volumes of edited documents by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) covering the UK's relations with the USSR and Eastern bloc states from 1968 to 1976 goes some way towards addressing this gap. Hopefully the FCO will follow suit with more volumes covering the deterioration of superpower *détente*, the 'second Cold War' in the early 1980s and the UK's response to *perestroika* and the disintegration of Communism in Eastern Europe and the USSR.[6]

Previous studies of the Wilson government tended to indict, rather than analyse, Labour's record in office. Wilson himself has been regarded as a 'Yorkshire Walter Mitty', and has been depicted as a shallow opportunist with a

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1951-1955, (Cambridge University Press 1991). J. Gearson, *Harold Macmillan and the Berlin Wall Crisis*, (Macmillan 1998). L. V. Scott, *Macmillan, Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Macmillan 1999).

[4] This shortage of material is shown by the sketchy coverage of post-1964 developments given in S. Greenwood's *Britain and the Cold War 1945-1991*, (Macmillan 2000).

[5] See, for example, R. Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War. The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991*, (London; Routledge 2000), pp.209-210; J. Dunbabin, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and their Allies*, (London; Longman 1994), pp.270-279; & R. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, (Washington; Brookings 1994, 2nd edition), pp.123-145.

[6] *Documents on British Policy Overseas. Series 3. Volume I. Britain and the Soviet Union 1968-1972*; & *Volume II. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, (London; HMSO 1997). *Volume III. Détente in Europe*, (London; Frank Cass 2001).

penchant for deceit and self-delusion.[7] Recent studies have sought to be more dispassionate and even-minded in their treatment of Wilson's policies, but it should be noted that Ben Pimlott and Chris Wrigley examine his government's foreign policy almost exclusively in terms of the 'special relationship' between a declining Britain and its superpower ally. Vietnam, for example, is discussed purely in the context of Anglo-American relations. The impact of East-West relations on British foreign policy from 1964 to 1970 has been ignored, even though the Cold War underpinned the development of international politics during this period. The objective of this thesis is to analyse the impact of both Anglo-Soviet relations and developments in East-West relations on the Wilson government's foreign and defence policies. Although unlike its predecessors, the Labour government was not faced with a Cold War crisis as severe as previous crises, for example over Berlin and Cuba, bilateral relations between London and Moscow were affected by the intensification of Sino-Soviet rivalry, the Vietnam war, the development of US-Soviet contacts on arms control, the discord between the USA and its European allies (especially France) and the pressures for internal reform in Eastern Europe which culminated in the 'Prague Spring' of 1968.[8]

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[7] See P. Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson*, (London; Penguin 1968); & A. Roth, *Harold Wilson. Yorkshire Walter Mitty*, (London; Macdonald & Jane's 1977), which goes no further than 1964. Like Foot, A. Morgan's *Harold Wilson* (London; Pluto Press 1992) criticises the Wilson government from a left-wing standpoint, while C. Ponting's, *Breach of Promise. Labour in Power 1964-1970*, (London; Hamish Hamilton 1989) reflects its title by offering a blunt indictment of Labour's record in power.

[8] See, for example, C. Wrigley, 'Now you see it, now you don't: Harold Wilson and Labour's Foreign Policy 1964-1970', in R. Coopey, S. Fielding & N. Tiratsoo (ed.), *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970*, (London; Pinter Press 1993), & Ponting, *Breach of Promise*. The same criticism applies to P. Ziegler, *Wilson*, (London; Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1993), & the most comprehensive of recent biographies on Wilson, B. Pimlott's *Harold Wilson*, (London; HarperCollins 1993).

As noted above, it was during the late 1960s that the policy of *détente* - of seeking to reduce tensions between the superpowers and their respective allies - began to bear fruit after two decades of ideological hostility and periodic war scares. The word *détente* was used in diplomatic parlance to define the relaxation of tensions and diminished animosity between states, and as Raymond Garthoff notes, *détente* is different from *entente*, which involves a positive improvement of inter-state relations.[9] *Détente* was first used in the context of the Cold War after Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, and a decade later the phrase appeared frequently in both British government documents and MPs speeches in Parliament. From 1964 onwards, France sought to improve its relations with the USSR and the East European states, while at the same time West Germany pursued its own policy (known as *Ostpolitik*) of reconciliation with the Eastern bloc states. De Gaulle's policy of *détente* was noteworthy because the French President's more proactive approach to East-West relations differed from that of his predecessors, while *Ostpolitik* was significant because West Germany's relations with Eastern bloc states had hitherto been characterised by uncompromising hostility and mutual non-recognition. Yet Wilson was not the first British Prime Minister to declare his interest in improving East-West relations. Before analysing the Wilson government's approach towards *détente*, it is necessary to analyse the policies of its predecessors from 1945 onwards.

In one of the few studies to analyse British policy towards East-West relations, Brian White argues that the promotion of *détente* was 'a recurring theme

[9] Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p.28.

in post-war British foreign policy', and that while co-operating with the USA and other Western allies to 'contain' the perceived Communist threat, British policy-makers also sought a less adversarial relationship with the USSR and other Communist states. According to White, Britain showed its traditional preference for diplomatic mediation as a means of addressing international disputes, and by a long-term interest in preserving the *status quo*. He also comments on the tendency of British policy-makers to maintain diplomatic and commercial contacts with other states, regardless of their ideological character. British interest in *détente* also derived from a genuine awareness in London that if Cold War rivalries deteriorated into a 'hot war', the consequences would be devastating, a concern which grew more pronounced following the development of thermonuclear weapons and the intensification of the superpower arms race in the 1950s.[10] Of Britain's post-war Prime Ministers, both Winston Churchill and Harold Macmillan were particularly vocal advocates of a relaxation of East-West tensions. One of the aims of this thesis is to assess to what extent the Wilson government's policy towards the USSR reflected the policies of its predecessors.

Throughout his political career, Wilson showed a consistent interest in Anglo-Soviet relations, in particular bilateral trading relations, which began when he was a junior Minister in the Board of Trade in 1947. During his first term as Prime Minister, Wilson paid three visits to Moscow, and at the time of the June 1970 election he was planning to undertake a fourth. By contrast, of his predecessors, Macmillan made but one trip to the USSR in 1959. In this respect,

[10] B. White, *Britain, Détente and Changing East-West Relations*, (Routledge 1992), pp.1-7, pp.36-49.

Wilson's contacts with the Soviet leadership are as worthy of study as his dealings with Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon, and another objective behind this thesis is to examine the extent of his involvement in Britain's dealings with the USSR and its Eastern bloc allies during his premiership.

This study examines the Wilson government's approach towards East-West relations, and the development of Britain's foreign and defence policies from 1964 to 1968. The key issues here concern how the Labour government responded to developments within the Communist world - in particular the Sino-Soviet split and the emergence of 'polycentrism' within Eastern Europe - and to the first efforts by the West European states to improve relations with the Eastern bloc. Britain's attempt to seek a less adversarial relationship with the Soviet bloc states were inevitably affected by the course of superpower rivalry and general trends in East-West relations. It is for this reason, as well as the importance of the UK's alliance ties with the USA, that this thesis refers to contemporary American attitudes towards the Cold War. Despite Lyndon Johnson's declared intention to 'build bridges' between the USA and the Eastern bloc states, American military intervention in Indochina delayed superpower *détente*, and the Vietnam war also had an adverse impact on Anglo-Soviet relations. It should also be noted that since the late 1940s the USSR was considered by British politicians and officials to be a strategic threat, and this study will also discuss what impact the growth of Soviet military power during the 1960s and the invasion of Czechoslovakia (August 1968) had on Britain's defence policy.

The principal sources for this thesis are the declassified government papers, available at the Public Record Office in Kew, in addition to the published memoirs of leading politicians and officials, secondary source monographs and articles, private papers, oral history interviews and contemporary newspaper reports. Due to the nature of the Anglo-American 'special relationship', and its significance for British external policies, this study also relies on declassified US government material available in archives on both sides of the Atlantic. During the drafting of this thesis, after considerable thought I decided that the chapter structure should be a combination of the chronological and thematic approaches. A purely thematic structure was unfeasible, because of the interrelationship between the issues analysed. For example, British policy towards Vietnam cannot be discussed without reference to the UK's defence policy 'East of Suez' or Sino-Soviet relations, while London's perceptions of internal developments in the Communist world were interlinked with British policy towards East-West trade. For the sake of coherence, the thesis structure is broadly chronological, although at certain times particular issues acquired greater prominence. For example, Chapter Four focuses on the rift between France and NATO in 1966 and its implications for European security, while Chapters Eight and Nine concentrate on the impact of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 on British policy-making.

The following limitations should be noted. Although the author makes use of recent research into the policies of the Soviet, Chinese and East European

Communist regimes, this thesis is not strictly speaking a study of Anglo-Soviet relations, as the emphasis is on British, rather than Soviet, foreign and defence policies. In addition, despite the Thirty Year Rule (for which historians have the Wilson government to thank), a considerable amount of documentary material relating to intelligence matters and nuclear policy remains classified.[11] For example, researchers can read Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) papers dated before 1969, as well as the sanitised files of the Cabinet Nuclear Policy Committee (PN) established by Wilson. Yet certain areas, such as the material intercepted and decrypted by GCHQ (the British signals intelligence service), remains inaccessible. This is a significant limitation not only on this thesis, but for any study of British post-war external policy, given the essential importance of espionage and nuclear matters not only regarding the Cold War but also the co-operation between the USA and the UK in the fields of defence and intelligence-gathering.[12]

It should be noted that this is a study of official, rather than popular, attitudes and opinions, although at certain points I refer to public and media perceptions of the USSR. The imprisonment of Gerald Brooke and the Soviet regime's treatment of dissidents was heavily criticised by the British press, but on the other hand the Soviet Premier, Alexei Kosygin, received a warm welcome from the public when he visited the UK in February 1967. By 1968, Foreign Office officials were concerned that popular opinion overlooked both the unsavoury

[11] On the Thirty Year Rule, see Richard Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister. Volume I. Minister of Housing* (Crossman, I), (London; Hamish Hamilton 1975), 5.8.65, pp.303-304.
[12] R. J. Aldrich, 'British Intelligence and the Anglo-American 'Special Relationship' during the Cold War', in *Review of International Studies*, 24/3 (1998), p.334.

aspects of the Soviet system and Moscow's objective of 'driving wedges' between the Western powers, and civil servants concluded that the British public needed to be reminded of the fact that the USSR was still a powerful potential foe.

The thesis is subdivided into nine chapters, the first of which analyses Britain's approach to East-West relations from the conclusion of the Second World War to the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis. The main question this chapter will address is whether it is correct to argue that successive British governments followed a consistent policy towards the Communist powers during this period. The second chapter analyses British perceptions in 1964 of developments within the Communist world, with particular reference to the perceived Soviet 'threat', internal developments in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and the implications of the Sino-Soviet split. This chapter also analyses the development of Wilson's interest in relations with the Eastern bloc prior to the Labour general election victory of October 1964. The third chapter concentrates on the period from Labour's return to office to February 1966, when Wilson paid his first visit to the USSR as Prime Minister. Labour returned to office at the same time as the overthrow of Nikita Khrushchev, and Wilson's efforts to develop ties with the new Soviet leadership were hampered both by East-West disputes over nuclear non-proliferation and by the escalation of the Vietnam war.

The fourth chapter focuses on British policy towards European security following de Gaulle's announcement that France would withdraw from NATO's

military command structure (March 1966). Chapter Five analyses developments in Anglo-Soviet relations from the Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin's visit to London (February 1967) to the condition of bilateral relations prior to Wilson's third trip to Moscow (January 1968). The sixth chapter focuses upon Britain's policy towards East-West trade in 1967 and 1968. The seventh chapter examines the expansion of Soviet military and maritime power during the late 1960s, as well as Moscow's increased involvement in the Third World, and will assess what impact if any the USSR's emergence as a world power had on British defence policy.

Chapter Eight analyses British (and Western) reactions to the 'Prague Spring', and the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia, and Chapter Nine will discuss the impact of the Czechoslovak crisis on Anglo-Soviet relations and on British perceptions of the USSR's policies. The conclusion will briefly summarise the course of bilateral relations in the years which followed, and will seek to answer the principal questions this thesis seeks to address; whether there was any continuity between the Labour government's policies towards East-West relations and those of its predecessors; what achievements, if any, the Wilson government made in pursuing *détente*; the extent to which Wilson himself was committed to improving Anglo-Soviet relations; and the significance of British policy at a time when the major Western powers were seeking to improve their relations with the Eastern bloc.

CHAPTER 1: BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS, 1945-1964.

The first twenty years of the Cold War were marked by a series of crises over Berlin (1948-1949 and 1958-1961), Korea (1950-1953), Indochina (1954) and Cuba (1962). The aim of this chapter is not so much to describe these clashes of interest between East and West, but to discuss how successive British governments responded to developments in both the Cold War and within the so-called Communist 'bloc' between 1945 and 1964.[1] One of the principal questions London sought to address concerned the feasibility of efforts to alleviate East-West tensions and to improve relations with the USSR and other Communist powers. This issue was related to the maintenance of the UK's alliance ties with other Western powers, the most important being those established with the USA.

It is due to the importance of Anglo-American relations for British interests, and the fact that British and West European security ultimately rested on US military and economic power, that it is necessary to compare and contrast the British approach to East-West relations to that of the Americans. Washington and London often disagreed over assessments of the perceived Soviet threat, and of developments in the Communist bloc. This chapter will therefore refer to American

[1] As far as official terminology was concerned, from 1965 onwards the Foreign Office used the phrase 'Soviet bloc' (or 'Eastern bloc') to refer to the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies. The latter (in addition to Yugoslavia and Albania) were referred to simply as 'East European countries'. Northern Department note, 11.6.65, N1981/1; & note by E. Youde (Northern Department - ND), 16.6.65, N1981/2, **FO371/182529**, Public Record Office (PRO). I have used these three phrases in a similar sense, and I also use the phrases 'Communist bloc', 'Communist powers' or 'Communist world' to describe the USSR and other Communist states such as China, particularly when discussing East-West relations before the Sino-Soviet split.

perceptions of East-West relations and, where relevant, to the role in the Cold War of two other Western European powers, France and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), because at certain stages in this period the Western powers were at odds over how to manage their relations with Communist powers. The principal controversy, which repeatedly emerged in Anglo-American relations, concerned whether it was feasible, or indeed necessary, to moderate East-West tensions by negotiating with the USSR.

From World War to Cold War: 1945-1951.

The conclusion of the Second World War brought about a major revolution in international relations. Before 1939 the USSR had played a peripheral role in world politics, but six years later the Soviets dominated Eastern and Central Europe.[2] In stark contrast Britain, though one of the victorious allied powers, emerged from the war economically exhausted and militarily over-stretched. A year before the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, British officials debated the future course of Anglo-Soviet relations. Before 1941, relations between London and Moscow had been blighted by mutual suspicion and ideological hostility, and during the war the Soviets had quarrelled with the Americans and British over military strategy and the post-war settlement. During the last two years of the war, the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff (COS) clashed over their respective assessments of future Soviet policy. The COS pessimistically envisaged the need

[2] Kitchen, *British Policy*, p.274. G. Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics*, (Routledge 1999), pp.2-3.

for an alliance with other 'Western' powers to withstand Soviet expansionism. In contrast, Foreign Office officials - in particular those of the Northern Department (which oversaw relations with the USSR and other East European states) - concluded that Moscow's interests lay in internal reconstruction and the containment of Germany, and that there was scope for Anglo-Soviet co-operation once the war was won. Winston Churchill believed that he had established a strong personal relationship with Stalin, although at certain points during the war he showed considerable concern over future Soviet intentions. For example, during the spring of 1945 the Prime Minister felt that the Western allies could soon find themselves at war with the USSR.[3] Following Labour's victory in the July 1945 election, there was a general belief within the party's ranks that Britain's new social-democratic government could maintain friendly relations with the Soviets. However, by early 1946 the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, was publicly complaining about Soviet hostility towards the UK.[4] In the months which followed Nazi Germany's defeat, Anglo-Soviet relations deteriorated sharply.

This decline reflected the collapse of the wartime alliance, resulting from fundamental disagreement over Germany's future and Anglo-American concerns over Soviet intentions concerning the Eastern Mediterranean and Iran. In its analyses of Soviet policy the JIC, which oversaw British intelligence gathering and analysis, frankly admitted that while assessing the USSR's military capabilities was

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[3] Kitchen, *British Policy*, p.244, pp.260-261. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.52-63. M. Folly's *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union*, examines official British wartime perceptions of the USSR in detail.
[4] Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life*, (Penguin 1990), p.100. H. Thomas, *Armed Truce*, (Hamish Hamilton 1986), p.296.

comparatively easy, it had scant information on Soviet intentions because of the secretive nature of the decision-making process in Moscow. This was a problem which constantly affected Britain's assessments of the 'Soviet threat', and during the late 1940s this factor led officials to assume the worst of the USSR's motives.[5] The British showed little concern with the imposition of Soviet client regimes on the East European states - an attitude demonstrated by Churchill's 'percentages agreement' with Stalin over the Balkans (October 1944). However, the USSR's expressed interest in expanding its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East was a different matter, as both regions were considered vital for the defence of Britain's overseas empire.[6] Recent Russian research suggests that Stalin's diplomats - like their British opposite numbers - regarded continued goodwill between the 'Big Three' as the best means of promoting Soviet security interests. However, during the autumn and winter of 1945 the Soviet dictator's inherent paranoia led him to reassess the USSR's foreign policy, and to mobilise the Soviet economy and society for a resumption of rivalry with the capitalist world.[7] The debate between academics over 'who started the Cold War ?' aside, it should be noted that from London's perspective the USSR had changed from an alliance partner to a potential enemy. The Foreign Office had initially adopted a sanguine view of Soviet intentions in 1944, but the reaction of Northern

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[5] JIC(47)7/1(Final), *Soviet Interests, Intentions and Capabilities*, 6.8.47, **CAB158/1**(PRO). P. Hennessy, *The Secret State*, (Penguin 2002), p.3, pp.12-14.

[6] A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin. Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951*, (Oxford University Press (OUP) 1985), pp.124-137.

[7] V. Pechatnov, *The Big Three After World War II. New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post War Relations with the United States and Great Britain*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Paper No.13 (1995); & Pechatnov (trans. V. Zubok), *"The Allies are pressing on you to break your will ...". Foreign Policy Correspondence between Stalin and Molotov and other Politburo Members, September 1945-December 1946*, CWIHP Paper No.26 (1999).

Department officials to the three despatches sent by the *chargé* of the Moscow Embassy, Frank Roberts, in March 1946 demonstrated how attitudes had changed.

Roberts argued that Soviet propaganda attacks were directed against Britain because it remained the only other power of any significance in Europe and Asia, but the UK's financial difficulties and diplomatic isolation presented opportunities for Moscow to extend Communism. Soviet ideology stressed that tensions (or 'contradictions') between capitalist states (notably between the UK and USA) would lead to the disintegration of capitalism and the triumph of world Communism - Roberts' judgement that Stalin believed that capitalist states were preordained to clash with each other have been confirmed by recent research.[8] Roberts emphasised the fundamental difference between pre-war Anglo-Soviet relations and the situation after 1945 by stating that all the other powers that had hitherto counter-balanced the USSR had been levelled by World War Two, although he qualified this assessment by commenting that the inefficiency and backwardness of the Soviet system hampered the USSR's power-projection capabilities.[9] Roberts' despatches had the same effect on London as George Kennan's 'Long Telegram' (February 1946) had on Washington. One Northern Department official expressed the widely held opinion that the Soviets were 'practising the most vicious power politics in the political, economic, and propaganda spheres' against British interests, and that the USSR would 'stop at

[8] V. Mastny, *NATO in the Beholder's Eye. Soviet Perceptions and Policies, 1949-56*, CWIHP Paper No.35, pp.36-37. V. Zubok & C. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, (Cambridge Ma; Harvard University Press 1997), pp.52-53, pp.73-74.
[9] F. Roberts (Moscow) to E. Bevin, 14, 17, & 18.3.46, N4065/97/38, N4156/97/38, & N4157/97/38, **FO371/56763**.

nothing short of war' to achieve its objective of a Communist world. In retrospect this rhetoric appears alarmist, but it should be noted that while British officials were unaware until 1951 that the Foreign Office and intelligence services had been penetrated by Donald Maclean, Kim Philby and other traitors, the extent of Soviet espionage in the UK during the Second World War and its aftermath provided some justification for official fears of Communist subversion.[10]

In response to Roberts' recommendations, the Foreign Office established the 'Russia Committee' to analyse developments in Moscow's foreign policy. Its functions were later taken over by the Permanent Under-Secretary's Department (PUSD), founded by Bevin in 1949 to oversee liaison with the COS and intelligence services.[11] Roberts' despatches had a clear influence on the Foreign Secretary, who in April 1946 informed the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, that the Soviets 'have decided upon an aggressive policy based upon militant Communism and Russian chauvinism'. Bevin and his officials were aware that Britain could not counter the Soviet 'threat' alone, but in the summer of 1945 Washington had shown complete disinterest in retaining alliance ties with the UK. Bevin and Foreign Office officials toyed with the concept of a 'third force' bloc - incorporating the West European states and their African colonies - but concluded that the impact of the war on potential 'third force' powers made this concept unrealistic. About the same time that the Attlee government came to regard the

[10] Interview with Frank Roberts, p.13, Diplomatic Oral History Programme (**DOHP**), Churchill College. C. Warner (ND), 'The Soviet Campaign Against this Country', 2.4.46, in R. Aldrich (ed.), *Espionage, security and intelligence in Britain, 1945-1970*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press 1998), pp.174-175. Hennessy, *Secret State*, p.83.

[11] R. Merrick, 'The Russia Committee of the British Foreign Office and the Cold War, 1946-1947', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20 (1985), pp.453-468. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.157-158.

USSR as a hostile state, the administration of Harry S. Truman likewise gradually adopted a policy of 'containing' Soviet influence. During 1946 the COS and British intelligence services established close ties with their American counterparts, and the following year Washington and London began to openly collaborate with each other in a policy of 'containing' the USSR.[12]

Until the spring of 1948, British officials regarded East-West rivalries as being restricted to the political, economic and diplomatic spheres. The JIC concluded that due to the human and material losses suffered during World War Two the USSR would be in no position to wage war before the mid-1950s at the earliest. In the short-term, Moscow was expected to focus upon internal reconstruction and the consolidation of its rule over Eastern Europe. The Soviets would avoid overt military aggression, but would also seek to promote the collapse of capitalism. Regarding this last point, the Attlee government shared the American concern that Western Europe was vulnerable to internal collapse and Communist takeover, and therefore supported the Marshall Plan for European economic recovery and integration (June 1947) and the foundation of the FRG two years later. After the Communist *coup* in Czechoslovakia (February 1948) and the Berlin blockade (July 1948-June 1949) the British were concerned not only that the French and Italian Communist Parties might emulate their Czechoslovak comrades, but by the apparent imbalance between Soviet and Western military power in Europe. It is worth comparing Bevin's instructions concerning the establishment of

[12] Bullock, *Bevin*, p.234. C. Bartlett, *"The Special Relationship". A Political History of Anglo-American Relations Since 1945*, (London; Longman 1991), p.13. pp.23-25.

the Information Research Department (IRD) within the Foreign Office (4 January 1948), and his Cabinet paper *The Threat to Western Civilisation* (5 March 1948). Regarding the IRD, Bevin maintained that American propaganda overplayed the Soviet threat and made the USSR appear stronger than it was, and that IRD propaganda should highlight Communism's weaknesses, in order to help 'relax rather than raise international tensions'.[13] In contrast, Bevin's Cabinet paper, depicting the USSR as a fundamental threat to Western culture and social values, was more alarmist in tone. The Foreign Secretary's argument that Britain had to align with the USA, the Commonwealth states and other West European democracies to counter the Soviet threat was endorsed by Cabinet colleagues following events in Czechoslovakia and Berlin. Having backed American efforts to promote West European economic recovery with the Marshall plan, the British played the principal role in creating the Brussels defence pact with France and the Benelux states in March 1948 (subsequently named the Western European Union, or WEU). The UK also made a significant contribution to the conclusion of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949.[14]

Although the Attlee government had embarked on an 'Atlanticist' policy of aligning with the USA and other Western powers to restrict Soviet expansion, the British were still determined to maintain a world role and, to the annoyance of the Americans, refused to participate in European economic integration. The

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[13] JIC(47)7/1(Final), 6.8.47, **CAB158/1**. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.137-140. C. Warner, 2.4.46; & E. Bevin, 'Future Foreign Publicity Policy', 4.1.48, in Aldrich, *Espionage, security*, pp.174-175, p.198.
[14] Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.368-371. CM(48)19th Cabinet conclusions, 5.3.48, **CAB128/12**(PRO). J. Young, *Cold War Europe 1945-1989*, (London; E. Arnold 1991), pp.6-7.

decision to develop an independent nuclear programme was intended to reaffirm the UK's great power status as well as to create a deterrent to Soviet aggression. In addition, the Attlee government did not completely rule out diplomatic means of resolving East-West differences. Curtis Keeble describes British objectives at this time as being to develop its alliance ties with the USA and other Western powers 'while seeking at the same time to reduce the inherent tension by dialogue with the Soviet Union'. Yet the prospects for such a dialogue while Stalin retained power were regarded as non-existent. Following the first Soviet nuclear test (August 1949) and the outbreak of the Korean war (June 1950), the British were also increasingly concerned to avert a third global conflict which would result in the UK's annihilation.[15] Although the Attlee government committed British forces to augment the US-led war effort in Korea, London was concerned that the conflict would escalate into a general East-West clash. The Truman administration's objectives, from June 1950 onwards, were to wage a limited conflict in Korea, prepare for the possibility of all-out war and to use all means, including covert action, to weaken the Communist powers. As far as the Americans were concerned, any conciliatory approach to the USSR, the People's Republic of China (PRC) or any other Communist state would be as ill-conceived and as disastrous as Britain's appeasement of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. Throughout the Korean war (1950-1953) British concerns of excessive American belligerence were met by accusations of 'appeasement' from Washington, and Anglo-American

[15] P. Hennessy, *Muddling Through*, (London; Indigo 1997), p.103. C. Keeble, *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89*, (Macmillan 1990), p.207. DO(50)20, 20.3.50, **CAB131/9**(PRO). Bartlett, *"Special Relationship"*, pp.34-37.

relations were characterised by similar differences of perception in successive Cold War crises.[16]

The Attlee government was also beset by criticisms from the Labour left that its foreign policy involved slavish obedience to an over-mighty, war-mongering America. The split within the Labour party widened after the Cabinet agreed in January 1951 to raise defence expenditure from £3.6 to £4.7 billion over a three-year period. This was a response to a general rearmament effort on the part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) powers following the outbreak of the Korean war, but left-wingers were sceptical as to the extent of the Soviet threat, and believed that rearmament would destroy the welfare state. In April 1951 three Ministers - Aneurin Bevan, John Freeman and Harold Wilson - resigned from the government on the grounds that the rearmament programme would not only reduce social spending but would undermine the British economy and indirectly assist the Communist cause.[17] Five months later, a divided Labour party lost the 1951 general election. It is ironic to note that while a consensus developed between the Conservatives and Labour's right-wing over British foreign policy goals, the latter quarrelled furiously with the left-wing 'Bevanites' over the party's policy towards East-West relations throughout Labour's thirteen years in opposition. As a consequence of this split, after Labour's return to office in 1964 there was a profound difference of outlook between the majority of Ministers on

[16] M. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, (Stanford Ca.; Stanford University Press 1992), pp.402-403. P. Lowe, *Containing the Cold War in East Asia*, (Manchester University Press 1997), pp.195-197.
[17] M. Dockrill, *British Defence since 1945*, (London; Basil Blackwell 1988), pp.42-44. For the left-wing Labour view, see Ian Mikardo, *Backbencher*, (London; Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1988), p.121. Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.157-162.

the one hand and a significant number of left-wing MPs, who regarded NATO as obsolete, favoured the abolition of the British nuclear deterrent, supported recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and who were generally anti-American.

Between 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'[18]: 1951-1958.

In October 1951 the Conservatives returned to office in Britain, and the following year Dwight D. Eisenhower won the US Presidential election. Stalin died in March 1953 and was succeeded by a 'collective leadership' consisting of his former henchmen. During these three years, the American, Soviet and British governments reassessed both their national security policies and their respective policies towards East-West relations. Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech at Fulton, Missouri (March 1946) reinforced his anti-Communist reputation, yet five years later he favoured direct negotiations with Stalin aimed at relaxing, if not ending, the Cold War. Churchill distinguished between 'appeasement' (concessions made from weakness) and 'easement' (the positive outcome of negotiating from a position of strength), and he argued that the West was in a position to 'negotiate from strength' with the Soviets to settle seemingly intractable issues such as the future of Germany. Motivated by a combination of personal vanity and a genuine desire to avert a

[18] This section title is taken from a quote by Pierson Dixon, a Russia Committee official. See J. Young (ed.), *The British Foreign Office and Cold War Fighting in the early 1950s: PUSC(51)16 and the 1952 'Sore Spots' Memorandum*, Leicester University Discussion Papers in Politics, No.195/2 (1995), p.5. I would like to thank Dr S. Dockrill for providing me with a copy of this paper.

third world war ('to jaw-jaw is better than to war-war'), Churchill was also convinced that increased East-West contacts through trade would eventually undermine an already moribund Communist system.[19] The Prime Minister's opinions were criticised not only by the Americans, but by the Foreign Office, who considered summitry to be inherently dangerous. The expectations summits aroused in domestic opinion could, officials argued, place pressure on Western governments to conclude superficially attractive agreements with the Soviets which would have adverse long-term repercussions. Churchill's intention to hold a summit with Stalin led the PUSD to review Britain's Cold War policies during the winter of 1951, the conclusions of which were produced in PUSC(51)16 (17 January 1952).

This paper bluntly stated that 'the present Soviet leadership is inspired not only by traditional Russian ambitions but also by a fanatical and dynamic revolutionary spirit which utterly rejects the very idea of a lasting settlement with the non-Communist part of the world'. Soviet foreign policy partly reflected 'traditional' ambitions in its determination to maintain Eastern Europe as a buffer against invasion from the West, as well as to expand its influence in the Middle East. Yet the USSR was also bent upon subverting and weakening the Western world while expanding into the 'vacuum areas' between it and the USA and its allies. PUSC(51)16 summarised British (and Western) objectives as being, first, to achieve 'equilibrium' between the Communist and Western worlds; second, to establish a '*modus vivendi*' as a basis for 'co-existence' with the Soviets; and

[19] Young, *Churchill's Last Campaign*, pp.27-31, pp.159-160, p.269.

finally, to pursue negotiations towards a 'more stable settlement'. Unlike Churchill, PUSD officials considered that the Western powers still had to strengthen their military posture, particularly their conventional forces, and reinforce their alliance ties before proceeding to the second stage of 'co-existence'. During this stage, rearmament would impose economic strains on the UK and its allies, but PUSD officials were confident that the Western states had the resources they needed to survive the 'long haul' of Cold War rivalry. Having gained 'equilibrium' with the Communist powers, the West could negotiate 'piecemeal' settlements with the USSR on specific issues. The final stage of negotiations aimed at a general settlement of East-West problems depended on the 'evolution' of the USSR from the intransigent hostility towards the West shown by Stalin.

PUSC(51)16's conclusions were crucial as they underpinned the British approach to East-West relations over the following decade. This paper regarded the restoration of Britain's economy as a priority, and concluded that while the attainment of 'equilibrium' involved a Western military build-up, the UK was not prepared to 'lightly embark on courses involving serious risk of war'. The Foreign Office adopted the view that war with the USSR was not inevitable. PUSD officials had American efforts to 'roll back' Communist power in Eastern Europe in mind when they asserted that while Western 'psychological warfare' and propaganda emphasising the Soviet bloc's weaknesses was permissible, there were 'sore spots' in Soviet foreign policy which if pressed could provoke a violent response from Moscow. The main 'sore spot' concerned Eastern Europe, and

PUSC(51)16 reflected the British belief that the Americans were too optimistic about the prospects of detaching East European 'satellites' from Soviet domination. British officials, in particular senior military officers, had initially supported Anglo-American covert action to assist anti-Communist resistance in Albania, the Baltic States and Ukraine. Yet by the early 1950s London had concluded that no Soviet bloc regime could be overthrown in a popular revolt without Western military assistance. Furthermore, covert operations in the Eastern bloc could provoke a major East-West clash in which the West Europeans would face the brunt of the Soviet response. PUSD officials argued that Britain should act as an 'influence of moderation', in order to prevent any reckless American action towards Eastern Europe or other 'sore spots'.[20] The Americans were critical of PUSC(51)16's conclusions, and the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) commented that its criticisms of covert action had 'an appeasement ring' to them. This divergence of opinions concerning support for anti-Communist rebellions in Eastern Europe reflected a wider dispute between Washington and London over whether a *modus vivendi* could be reached with the USSR.[21]

The differences between Churchill and the Foreign Office concerned methods rather than objectives. PUSC(51)16 concluded that negotiations with the USSR were in the short-term unlikely given the mindset of the present leadership (i.e. Stalin), and inadvisable until the Western world had achieved 'equilibrium' with the Communist states. PUSD officials also thought that any agreements

[20] PUSC(51)16, *Future Policy towards Soviet Russia*, 17.1.52, is in Young, *'Sore Spots'*. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.142-149, pp.160-179.
[21] Aldrich, 'British intelligence', pp.339-340.

reached after attaining 'equilibrium' would be limited in scope. Churchill's intention to re-establish a 'working relationship' with Stalin was unrealistic, given the extreme paranoia the latter displayed during his final two years. Furthermore, the Prime Minister's subsequent efforts to establish contact with Stalin's successors was hampered by the struggle for succession within the 'collective leadership', which remained unresolved until 1957. It should be noted that neither Churchill nor the Foreign Office considered the overthrow of Communism to be a viable objective. The Prime Minister hoped that East-West contacts would eventually erode the ideological basis of the Soviet bloc, while PUSC(51)16 referred to the IRD's efforts to discredit Communism, but placed considerable emphasis on the long-term 'evolution' of the USSR towards less doctrinaire external policies. The Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, shared his officials' views that in the meantime the Western powers should focus on building up their economic and military strength. This involved addressing, in particular, the controversy surrounding West German rearmament.[22]

The service chiefs likewise emphasised the need for the Western states to concentrate on economic and military consolidation. This approach was outlined in the *Global Strategy* paper of 1952 which, like previous COS studies in 1947 and 1950, stressed that the Soviets could be deterred from aggression by Western unity and the USA's nuclear supremacy. The 1952 *Global Strategy* paper referred to 'imperialist Russia' employing Communism as a tool of policy - the implication

[22] Roberts, pp.3-4, **DOHP**. Young, *Foreign Office*, introduction, p.6. For Stalin's state of mind in 1951-1953, see D. Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, (New Haven Co.; Yale University Press 1994), pp.273-293, and R. Service, *A History of Twentieth Century Russia*, (Penguin 1998), pp.324-328.

being that the 'Russians' would moderate their ideological objectives if Western strength and cohesion made their attainment impossible. While recommending the creation of a British nuclear force, the establishment of a global anti-Communist front and (like PUSC(51)16) endorsing psychological operations to play on Sino-Soviet tensions and other weaknesses in the Communist world, the COS were initially wary of the consequences of rearming West Germany, another potential 'sore spot' in East-West relations. By 1952, there was therefore a general consensus in Whitehall that Britain was obliged, to use the classical metaphor used by one Russia Committee official, to 'steer between the Scylla of another war and the Charybdis of an appeasement policy which might forfeit us United States sympathy'.[23]

Following Stalin's death, Churchill's interest in 'easement' was revived when one member of the 'collective leadership', Georgi Malenkov, declared on 15 March 1953 that 'there is no disputed or unresolved question that cannot be settled peacefully by mutual agreement among the interested countries'. These comments influenced the Prime Minister's call for a summit meeting with the Soviets in a speech in Parliament on 11 May. Malenkov was concerned by the escalation of the superpower arms race, in particular the development of thermo-nuclear weapons, and had come to the conclusion that a world war would destroy both Communism and capitalism. Although Malenkov was later expelled from the leadership by his rivals, Nikita Khrushchev subsequently used similar arguments in

[23] D(52)26, *Defence Policy and Global Strategy*, 17.6.52, **CAB131/12**(PRO). Excerpts from the 1947 and 1950 COS plans are in Appendixes 3 & 4 of J. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence. British Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1964*, (Clarendon 1995), pp.396-399, pp.403-404. Young, *'Sore Spots'*, p.5.

his public pronouncements.[24] Malenkov's statement was treated with scepticism in the Foreign Office, where officials felt that the 'collective leadership' was 'adopting a much cleverer policy for dividing and weakening the West than Stalin ever did'. In Washington, the Eisenhower administration undertook its own reappraisal of the perceived Soviet threat, and the 'New Look' strategy outlined in NSC162/2 envisaged a 'long haul' of East-West rivalry in which economic prosperity would be as crucial to Western security as military strength. While the Conservatives scrapped the Attlee government's rearmament programme, Eisenhower likewise rejected the conventional military build-up which his predecessor initiated, relying more on the expansion of US nuclear forces.[25] Yet if American opinions on the military means needed to deter the USSR had changed, neither the President nor his senior advisors believed that Soviet objectives had been altered by Stalin's death.[26]

One source of constant friction between London and Washington concerned the embargo on strategic trade with the Communist powers, regulated since 1950 by the Co-ordinating Commission (COCOM) of participating powers. The aim of the embargo was to prevent the USSR and its allies from acquiring materials which would enhance their technological and military capabilities; there was no intention as such to wage 'economic warfare' to cripple the economies of

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[24] R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star*, (Ithaca; Cornell University Press 1992), pp.204-205. *Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, 5th Series*, Vol.515, (HMSO 1953), cols. 863-898 (515 H.C.Deb5s) (HMSO 1953), cols. 863-898). Zubok & Pleshakov, *Kremlin's Cold War*, p.167-169.

[25] Evelyn Shuckburgh, *Descent into Suez. Diaries 1951-1956*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1986), 24-30.3.53, pp.82-83. S. Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New Look National Security Policy, 1953-61*, (Macmillan 1991), pp.19-29, pp.42-47.

[26] Moscow to State Dept, 18.3.53, pp.1131-1132, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1952-1954, Vol. VII*, (Washington; US Government Printing Office 1988).

Communist states. Yet the Americans and British were at odds over the definition of 'strategic' exports, with the former intent on blocking all trade in goods which could enhance the USSR's military-industrial potential. The British position reflected the UK's dependence on world trade, and as such London was less ready to ban exports of 'dual use' items.[27] These Anglo-American disputes over COCOM continued well into the 1960s.

Another source of tension concerned the possibility that Western efforts to achieve 'equilibrium' with the Soviet bloc rubbed raw the 'sore spots' which would exacerbate East-West tensions. The British brokered a settlement on the West German rearmament problem at the London conference (28 September-3 October 1954) in which the FRG gained NATO membership, and pledged not to acquire nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. In return, Alliance members recognised the FRG as the only legitimate German state, and the UK committed itself to maintain the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) to help defend its NATO and WEU allies. One result of the London agreement was that the USSR and its East European 'satellites' founded the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO, or 'Warsaw Pact') in May 1955. On the issue of West German rearmament, Britain was ultimately less concerned with upsetting Soviet or East European sensibilities than with achieving 'equilibrium' with the Eastern bloc. The British calculated that Moscow's response to the FRG's admission to NATO would not

[27] I. Jackson, *The Economic Cold War*, (London; Palgrave 2001), p.7, pp.66-72, pp.109-111, pp.125-127.

go beyond propaganda invective and (with the establishment of the WTO) the formalisation of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.[28]

However, during the crises concerning Indochina (1954) and Taiwan (1955 and 1958) the British were less prepared to support American actions which could exacerbate tensions with the Communist powers. Washington had opposed the UK's earlier decision to recognise the PRC and Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, quarrelled with Eden during the Geneva conference on Indochina. The latter's private secretary, Evelyn Shuckburgh, noted that the British delegation had a better working relationship with the Soviets than with the Americans, who refused to endorse the accords reached at the end of the conference (22 July 1954). While US officials concluded that the British lacked resolve, and were treating the USSR as if it were Tsarist Russia, the Foreign Office Minister of State, Selwyn Lloyd, expressed his colleagues' feelings when he commented that the Americans possessed 'emotional feelings about Communist China and to a lesser extent Russia which borders (sic) on hysteria'.[29] There was also significant, although privately expressed, concern within the Churchill government that the USA might wage a pre-emptive war while it retained nuclear supremacy over the USSR.[30]

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[28] S. Dockrill, *West German Rearmament*, pp.12-15, pp.56-58, pp.153-155. Craig Nation, *Red Star*, pp.157-160.
[29] Shuckburgh, *Descent into Suez*, 28 & 30.4.54, pp.180-185. Young, *Churchill's Last Campaign*, p.206.
[30] See Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.10-11, pp.327-333; & Lord Salisbury's comments in CM(54)52nd Cabinet conclusions, 23.7.54, **CAB128/27**(PRO).

Churchill's efforts to seek a ground-breaking summit with Malenkov provoked a Cabinet revolt in April 1954 - Ministers were angered both by the Prime Minister's failure to consult them, and by Churchill's readiness to accept Soviet protestations of goodwill at face value.[31] An additional problem for the Prime Minister was that the 'collective leadership' was suspicious of the Prime Minister's motives, and doubted whether his policy of 'easement' had any influence on American policy-making.[32] There were signs that compromise agreements could be made with Communist powers, notably the armistice agreement in Korea (July 1953) and the conclusion of the Austrian state treaty (May 1955). However, the Geneva summit meeting between the American, British, Soviet and French leaders in July 1955 produced little but ephemeral goodwill. The problem of German reunification remained an intractable one, and Eden (who had succeeded Churchill three months before the summit) observed 'no sign of any new flexibility in the Russian attitude'.[33]

In April 1956, Eden received the Soviet Premier, Nikolai Bulganin, and the First Secretary of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), Nikita Khrushchev, on a state visit to Britain. The visit was marred by a scandal concerning a botched attempt by the British intelligence service (SIS) to place a

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[31] Young, *Churchill's Last Campaign*, pp.272-279. Keeble, *Britain and Soviet Union*, p.139, p.248.
[32] U. Bar-Noi, 'The Soviet Union and Churchill's Appeals for High-Level Talks, 1953-54', in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 9/3 (1998), pp.110-133.
[33] CM(55)23rd conclusions, 17.7.55, **CAB128/29**(PRO). The Geneva summit is examined in S. Dockrill & G. Bischof (ed.), *Cold War Respite. The Geneva Summit of 1955*, (Baton Rouge La; Louisiana State University Press 2000).

Soviet cruiser in Portsmouth harbour under surveillance.[34] Eden's public comment on the clauses of the final communiqué concerning bilateral commercial, cultural and technological contacts was, one Foreign Office official recalled, 'not based on any broad philosophy of 'bridge-building' [between East and West]', but was simply an attempt to prove to domestic opinion that the visit had been worthwhile.[35] Nevertheless, in its policy towards COCOM the British government had already stressed the UK's readiness to engage in non-strategic trade with Communist powers. In addition, both Churchill and the Foreign Office had expressed the view that bilateral cultural and scientific exchanges were the only feasible means of encouraging the Soviet bloc's internal 'evolution'. This view was subsequently reinforced by the upheavals in Hungary and Poland in the autumn of 1956.

By 1952 British officials concluded that efforts to inspire anti-Communist revolts behind the Iron Curtain were futile unless backed by Western military support, an action which no NATO power (including the USA) would contemplate. The brutal suppression of the Hungarian revolution by the Soviet army showed that the USSR was determined to maintain its hegemony over Eastern Europe.[36] In October 1956, Khrushchev accepted (albeit with ill-grace) the downfall of Poland's Stalinist leadership and the emergence of a 'national Communist' regime in Warsaw under Wladyslaw Gomulka. However, the following month he used force

[34] K. Morgan, *The People's Peace*, (OUP 1992), pp.146-147. Eden to E. Bridges (Treasury), 9.5.56, in Aldrich, *Espionage, security*, pp.33-34.
[35] D. Wilson, 'Anglo-Soviet Relations: The Effect of Ideas upon Reality', in *International Affairs*, 50/3 (1974), pp.364-365.
[36] Bartlett, *"Special Relationship"*, pp.86-87. Hennessy, *Secret State*, pp.36-37. K. Kyle, *Suez*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1991) analyses the crisis in detail.

to save the Communist system in Hungary from a popular revolt.[37] Traditionally, British governments had never shown much interest in events in Eastern Europe unless these had implications closer to home, as was thought to be the case with Czechoslovakia in 1948. During the East Berlin rising of June 1953, Churchill showed no concern for the plight of the East Germans.[38] Three years later, the JIC concluded that the Soviets were 'prepared to go at any lengths to keep the Soviet *bloc* intact', and that 'the example of Hungary would probably deter similar anti-Soviet groups in other [East European] countries'. Yet Gomulka's rise to power showed that Moscow would tolerate 'limited concessions ... as the price of subduing popular discontent' in order to preserve Communism in Poland.[39] It should be noted that at Cabinet level, the Eden government's attention was focused on the Suez crisis, and Ministers paid little if any attention to events in either Hungary or Poland. Judging from the contents of the Prime Minister's files, Eden showed a similar lack of interest in East European developments.[40]

After Harold Macmillan became Prime Minister following Eden's resignation (January 1957), his priority was to restore the damage done to the 'special relationship' by Suez. Macmillan also hoped to promote East-West *détente*, and was concerned by the escalating superpower strategic arms race. However, his support for an international ban on nuclear tests conflicted with the development

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[37] Events in Hungary and Poland in the autumn of 1956 are summarised in R. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, (Routledge 1994), pp.283-303, and N. Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*, (OUP 1986), pp.9-10.

[38] Young, *Churchill's Last Campaign*, p.176, p.187. C. Bekes, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics*, CWIHP Working Paper No.16, (1996), pp.5-7, pp.14-18.

[39] JIC(56)123(Final)(Revise), *Soviet Policy in the light of the situation in the Middle East and the Satellites*, 6.12.56, **CAB158/26**(PRO). JIC(56)97th & 101st meetings, 25.10.56 & 9.11.56, **CAB159/25**(PRO).

[40] See CM(56)68th-85th conclusions, 3.10-20.11.56, **CAB128/30**(PRO). The only file on Hungary in **PREM11/1388**(PRO), contains an appeal for assistance by Hungarian émigrés to Eden, dated 21.10.56.

of the British deterrent, the RAF's V-bomber force. The 1957 defence review committed the UK to develop its own deterrent, but cut defence expenditure from 10 to 7% of gross national product, upon which Britain had to support not only BAOR but its military commitments 'East of Suez' arising from decolonisation and the UK's membership of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO).[41] The defence review provided part of the rationale behind Britain's intention to reduce BAOR, but the Macmillan government also believed that the UK could fulfil its commitment to NATO with fewer forces. After months of bargaining within the WEU, and furious disputes with Washington and Bonn, BAOR was reduced in two phases from 77,000 to 55,000 troops in December 1959. The equivocal British response to the Rapacki plan for a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe (named after the Polish foreign minister, Adam Rapacki) also annoyed allied powers. NATO rejected Rapacki's proposals because their implementation would leave the Alliance vulnerable to the WTO's conventional superiority, but Selwyn Lloyd, now the Foreign Secretary, advised his West German counterpart that 'we should avoid giving the impression that new proposals and initiatives [from East European countries] ... are automatically rejected by the West'.[42]

The West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, suspected that the British regarded disengagement as an alibi for further reductions in BAOR and for

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[41] I. Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship*, (Clarendon 1994), pp.222-223. M. Dockrill, *British Defence*, pp.65-71.
[42] S. Dockrill, 'Britain's Motives for Troop Reductions in Western Germany, 1955-1958', in *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20/3 (1997), pp.45-65. Lloyd to H. von Brentano, 4.1.58, **FO371/137078**(PRO).

reneging on their commitment to their WEU partners. There were similar suspicions in Washington, despite the fact that the Eisenhower administration initially intended to reduce the US military presence in Europe. Adenauer had some grounds to be suspicious, as Macmillan had not rejected disengagement outright.[43] Ironically, Khrushchev had planned to reduce the USSR's conventional forces, partly because he favoured an increased emphasis on nuclear power, but also because of the economic cost of maintaining existing force levels. Khrushchev's thinking was similar to that which had influenced the 'New Look' and the 1957 British defence review, but any intention in Washington, Moscow or London of reducing conventional force levels further was rendered impossible by the Berlin crisis.[44]

Berlin, Cuba and 'Cold *détente*': 1958-1964.

Soon after Khrushchev emerged victorious after the power struggle between Stalin's successors, East-West rivalries took a sharp and potentially dangerous turn for the worse. This was to a considerable degree due to the Soviet leader's mercurial conduct. By a combination of crude bluster and intimidation he alienated Western leaders, while his volatile and erratic behaviour alarmed even his compatriots. Khrushchev was confident that the Soviet system's economic and technological prowess would surpass that of the capitalist world, which was

[43] Gearson, *Berlin Crisis*, pp.25-30. W. Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War*, (Palgrave 2002), pp.44-47. Lloyd to Macmillan, 26.4.58, **PREM11/2347**(PRO).
[44] M. Evangelista, *'Why Keep such an Army?' Khrushchev's Troop Reductions*, CWIHP Paper No.19 (1997).

preordained by its 'contradictions' to collapse. By expressing this belief with the phrase 'We will bury you', he contributed to Western fears of a more aggressive Soviet foreign policy.[45] These concerns were intensified by Khrushchev's threat in November 1958 to hand over responsibility for Berlin and its access routes to the GDR, unless the four powers occupying the city (the USA, UK, USSR and France) agreed to a German peace treaty.

The Soviet leader's ultimatum was prompted by the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, who was frustrated by the flight of refugees from his country, but because the Western powers did not recognise the GDR, Khrushchev's actions provoked a major crisis. The Berlin issue also exposed the intra-Western divisions over Germany's future. Officially, Britain supported German reunification, although because a reunified Germany within NATO would be as unacceptable to the Soviets as a Communist Germany would be to the West, the British privately upheld the *status quo* as a favourable alternative. The Americans and French shared this view, but the Adenauer government was not prepared to accept Germany's indefinite division. Bonn also refused to recognise any state other than the USSR which had diplomatic relations with the GDR (this being the essence of the 'Hallstein doctrine') or to recognise Germany's Eastern border with Poland (the 'Oder-Neisse line') and Czechoslovakia.[46] Before Khrushchev's ultimatum, the British ambassador to Moscow warned London that the USSR showed no interest

[45] Roberts, *Soviet Union*, pp.42-44. Zubok & Pleshakov, *Kremlin's Cold War*, pp.174-175.
[46] Gearson, *Berlin Crisis*, pp.54-55. Zubok & Pleshakov, *Kremlin's Cold War*, pp.196-198. COS140/27/1/58, 27.1.58, **FO371/135627**(PRO). W. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe. Forty Years of German Foreign Policy*, (Yale University Press 1989), pp.160-163.

in improving relations with the West, and advised that NATO powers had to preserve their solidarity in order to resist 'further blackmail or splitting tactics' by the Soviet leader. Yet during the Berlin crisis, the British were suspected by the Americans, French and West Germans of being prepared to recognise the GDR and sacrifice the allied position in West Berlin, in order to avert conflict with the USSR. The Eisenhower administration concluded that Macmillan was preparing to appease Moscow in the same way that Neville Chamberlain gave way to Hitler at Munich.[47]

The Prime Minister's trip to Moscow (February 1959) - the first peace-time visit by a British Prime Minister to the USSR - went ahead despite opposition from allied governments. Macmillan was bullied and humiliated by Khrushchev, who made a temporary gesture in lifting the deadline on a German settlement imposed the previous November. The Prime Minister's envious response to Khrushchev's summit with Eisenhower at Camp David (September 1959) and his dismay over the collapse of the four-power Paris summit (May 1960) reflected his concern for personal prestige, as well as with alleviating East-West tensions.[48] At the height of the crisis in June 1961, the JIC noted that Khrushchev 'appeared to be convinced that the West was not prepared to go to war over Berlin'. The Soviet leader would have regarded this as Macmillan's attitude, and it was also noteworthy that public pronouncements from Washington stressed the American commitment to defending the allied position in West Berlin, rather than in the city

[47] P.Reilly (Moscow) to Lloyd, 12.2.58, **PREM11/2347**(PRO). Lloyd to Macmillan, 15.2.60, **PREM11/2998**(PRO).
[48] Gearson, *Berlin Crisis*, p.156. Keeble, *Britain and Soviet Union*, pp.260-266.

as a whole. The eventual resolution of the crisis, following Ulbricht's decision to build the Berlin wall (August 1961), was not a result of Macmillan's diplomacy, but due to a tacit recognition by the powers involved that there was no feasible alternative to the *de facto* division of Germany. Yet the equivocal British stance on Western rights in Berlin was regarded in Washington, Paris and Bonn as evidence of an appeasement mentality.[49]

Soon after his inauguration (January 1961), John F. Kennedy oversaw the expansion of American military power in order to maintain nuclear superiority over the USSR, and to give the USA greater strategic flexibility than was considered possible within the bounds of the 'New Look'. 'Flexible response' involved revising the NATO strategic concept agreed in 1957 (MC70), which concluded that any Soviet aggression would involve the immediate use of nuclear weapons. While MC70 based NATO defence policy on nuclear power, Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, intended to increase the Alliance's conventional military forces in order to give NATO the ability to respond to a WTO attack by non-nuclear means. In practice, however, the Kennedy administration did little to increase US troop levels in Europe. The President felt that the European NATO powers were not bearing their share of the Alliance's defence burden, and Washington wanted the West Europeans to undertake the conventional force build-up which would make 'flexible response' practical.[50] The

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[49] JIC(61)32nd meeting, 23.6.61, **CAB159/35**(PRO). J. L. Gaddis, *We Now Know*, (OUP 1998), pp.148-149. Gearson, *Berlin Crisis*, pp.202-203. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe*, p.170.

[50] J. S. Duffield, *Power Rules. The Evolution of NATO's Conventional Force Posture*, (Stanford Ca.; Stanford University Press 1995), pp.157-165. F. Gavin, 'The Myth of Flexible Response: United States Strategy in Europe during the 1960s', in *International History Review*, 27/4 (2001), pp.849-850, pp.858-860.

Kennedy administration's sentiments are worth noting, as these persisted and contributed to NATO's internal crisis in the third year of Lyndon Johnson's term in office.

British officials agreed with McNamara's view that MC70 was out of date, but opposed his position on conventional forces.[51] In the summer of 1961, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) reviewed NATO strategy on the basis of British assessments of the Soviet 'threat'. The JIC took the view that the USSR would not deliberately risk a global war which would lead to mutual destruction - Soviet military doctrine stated that even a 'limited' East-West conflict in Europe would inevitably escalate into all-out thermonuclear war. On the basis of this assessment, the MoD study (named the Mottershead report) concluded that there was a slight risk of war by 'accident' (caused by a border clash in Central Europe) or 'miscalculation' (involving a WTO probing attack to test NATO's resolve). The Mottershead report concluded that NATO did not need to increase its conventional forces in order to meet either contingency. Put simply, while McNamara was 'thinking the unthinkable' in envisaging the possibility of a non-nuclear war in Central Europe, British thinking was focused on deterrence, and this attitude subsequently provided the basis for British views on NATO's strategic review.[52]

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[51] C. Bluth, 'Reconciling the Irreconcilable: Alliance Politics and the Paradox of Extended Deterrence in the 1960s', in *Cold War History*, 1/2 (2001), p.74, pp.92-93.
[52] J. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, (OUP 1982), pp.201-205. Annex to JP(61)86(Final), 18.7.61, **DEFE4/137**(PRO). B. Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG*, (Macmillan 1997), p.39, pp.48-50.

In October 1962, the discovery of Soviet medium-range missiles (MRBMs) in Cuba sparked off a superpower crisis which nearly escalated into global war.[53] Britain's role in the Cuban crisis was, as one Foreign Office official later commented, 'peripheral',[54] and before the MRBMs were discovered British officials regarded American concerns of a Soviet missile build-up in Cuba to be far-fetched.[55] Two months after the crisis was resolved, the JIC confidently concluded that Khrushchev's miscalculation 'in no way invalidated [our] earlier assessment' that the Soviets 'would be more cautious in the pursuit of their foreign policy'. What was evident the following year was that Khrushchev was noticeably more restrained in his dealings with the West. D. C. Watt describes 1963 as the year of 'Cold *détente*', in which agreements such as the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) concluded by the USA, USSR and UK (August 1963) were counterbalanced by ongoing squabbles over Berlin and conflicts in Indochina. Macmillan did encouraged Kennedy to negotiate an LTBT with Moscow, although the latter demonstrated his own commitment to *détente* in his American University speech (10 June).[56] Following Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, Lyndon Johnson inherited his predecessor's policy on East-West relations, and officials like Roswell Gilpatric, the assistant Secretary of Defense, considered it 'possible, though not

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[53] The most recent general study is by A. Fursenko & T. Naftali, *'One Hell of a Gamble'. Khrushchev, Castro, Kennedy, and the Cuban Missile Crisis 1958-1964*, (London; J Murray 1997).
[54] P. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy. How the Joint Intelligence Committee Saw the World*, (John Murray 2002), p.190
[55] Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.621. G. Rawnsley, 'How Special is Special ? The Anglo-American Alliance During the Cuban Missile Crisis', in *Contemporary Record*, 9/3 (1995), pp.586-601; P. Boyle, 'The British Government's view of the Cuban Missile Crisis', in *Contemporary British History*, 10/3 (1996), pp.22-38.
[56] JIC(62)63rd meeting, 6.12.62, **CAB159/38**(PRO). D. C. Watt (ed.), *Survey of International Affairs 1963*, (RIIA & OUP 1979), pp.3-4. J. See, 'An Uneasy Truce: John F. Kennedy and Soviet-American *Détente*, 1963', in *Cold War History*, 2/2 (2002), pp.161-194.

assured, that we shall at last find a more than temporary easing' of Cold War tensions.[57]

Paul Gore-Booth, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office from January 1965 to February 1969, retrospectively observed that by early 1964 there were 'no serious irritants' affecting Anglo-Soviet relations, and that British officials were more concerned with crises concerning decolonisation in the 'Third World' than with East-West relations.[58] At this time, the old bipolar order Frank Roberts had observed in 1946 was disintegrating. The post-war economic revival of Western Europe was symbolised by the founding of the EEC in 1957, and Macmillan's belated application for British membership was vetoed by the French President, Charles de Gaulle, in January 1963. De Gaulle argued that the UK's ties to the USA would harm the EEC's development - the irony here was that the 'third force' idea of the 1940s was subsequently adopted by Paris to the detriment of British interests.[59] Western Europe's increased self-confidence was mirrored by the increased assertiveness of Romania and other East European states, as well as the emergence of China as a rival to the USSR's authority over the Communist world. The Sino-Soviet split, which was an open secret after 1961, also threatened Moscow's efforts to enhance its influence over newly independent Third World

[57] Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War*, pp.76-80. Roswell Gilpatric, 'Our Defense Needs: The Long Term View', in *Foreign Affairs*, 42/3 (1964), p.369.
[58] Paul Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth and Respect*, (London; Constable Press 1974), pp.330-332.
[59] W. Hitchcock, *France Restored. Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe 1944-1954*, (Chapel Hill NC; University of North Carolina Press 1998), pp.116-132. J. Lacouture, *De Gaulle. The Ruler*, (London; HarperCollins 1991), pp.355-359.

states.[60] British opinions on these developments and their implications for East-West relations will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Conclusion: A British approach to East-West relations ?

According to Joseph Korbel, the British treated *détente* as 'a matter of style, of political atmosphere, of some mutual trust rather than of some momentous and overt policy'. Unlike West Germany, Britain did not have any direct dispute, or any recent legacy of 'past hostilities' or 'political ambitions', to complicate its dealings with the Soviet bloc. It was this difference in perspective, as well as the UK's tacit acceptance of the *status quo* in Europe, which contributed to the sharp disputes between London and Bonn over Berlin and the feasibility of German reunification.[61] Korbel's comments aside, it should be noted that in the first two decades of the Cold War *détente* was often conspicuous by its absence. During this period, under the Attlee government and its Conservative successors, there were three distinct features behind Britain's approach to East-West relations, concerning security, diplomacy and what would now be termed 'trans-national' contacts in trade and other fields.

Since 1948, two basic objectives of British national security policy were the preservation of the Anglo-American alliance and the collective defence of Western

[60] P. Calvocoressi, *World Politics since 1945*, (Longman 1996, 7th edition), p.26, pp.176-177.
[61] J. Korbel, *Détente in Europe. Real or Imaginary ?*, (Princeton NJ; Princeton University Press 1972), pp.36-38.

Europe, reinforced by a US troop presence and by the USA's nuclear arsenal. British military and civilian officials were generally confident that as long as these two factors existed, the Soviets were unlikely to risk the consequences of deliberate aggression.[62] Yet successive British governments were anxious not to provoke a world war, and while during Cold War crises Washington fretted about the possibility of the UK doing 'another Munich', London was equally concerned that excessive American belligerence would result in another Sarajevo. During the second Berlin crisis, the emphasis the Macmillan government placed on averting a military clash with the Soviets overrode the general objective of preserving Western solidarity - American, West German and French officials clearly considered this to be the case. Although convinced that the USSR would not deliberately risk the consequences of a world war, the British were always aware that in a third global conflict the UK would face nuclear annihilation.[63] It should be noted that before the Soviets developed inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of striking the USA American officials tended to be more prepared to contemplate raising the stakes in any East-West confrontation.

Regarding diplomatic contacts with Communist states, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations tended to regard such contacts as being 'somehow unnatural' - this attitude was evident in Dulles' demeanour at the Geneva conferences of 1954 and 1955. Although Eisenhower and Kennedy's summit

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[62] White, *Britain (and) Détente*, p.10, p.42. M. Evangelista, 'The "Soviet Threat": Intentions, Capabilities and Context', in *Diplomatic History*, 22/3 (1998), p.446. COS(52)28, Appendix (no date, 1952), **DEFE13/352**(PRO).
[63] This awareness is evident, for example, in HDC(55)3, *The Defence Implications of Fall-Out from a Hydrogen Bomb*, 11.3.55, **CAB134/940**(PRO).

meetings with Khrushchev (and the installation of the Washington-Moscow hotline in 1963) legitimised US-Soviet contacts, the USA still refused to recognise the PRC or Fidel Castro's Cuba. Yet as White observes, Britain had a tradition of disregarding ideology as an influence on diplomacy.[64] Paul Gore-Booth's comments in March 1967 are worth quoting as they reflected the survival of this tradition. Gore-Booth asserted that '[our] need to oppose Communism cannot be based simply on our strong distaste for it as a system', as Britain was 'compelled to live with and even sometimes co-operate with other distasteful regimes'. British policy did not involve overthrowing the Soviet, Chinese, Yugoslav or other Communist regimes - 'we do not like them, but we accept them'. What was unacceptable was that these regimes espoused aim was to spread world Communism, and while Britain was determined to maintain diplomatic relations and to negotiate with Communist states whenever possible, the policy of 'containment' remained unchanged. In addition, the UK's reluctance to support anti-Communist rebellions did not extend to covert efforts to discredit the Soviet and Chinese regimes through the IRD's propaganda.[65] Britain's approach to diplomatic relations with Communist powers did reflect the UK's reduced influence and comparative weakness. For example, unlike the Americans the British could not act as though Mao Zedong's regime did not exist as long as their interests in Hong Kong were at stake. It should also be noted that British politicians - both Labour and Conservative - avoided the strident and vitriolic anti-Communist rhetoric

[64] Gaddis, *Containment*, p.189. White, *Britain (and) Détente*, pp.37-40.
[65] SC(67)17, *Communist Policies and Propaganda: Our Response*, 6.3.67, **FCO49/58**(PRO).

which characterised American political discourse, and that there was no equivalent of 'McCarthyism' in London.[66]

On the issue of commercial, cultural and scientific contacts, Eden had cited these in 1956 as areas where Anglo-Soviet co-operation could produce mutually beneficial results, and Macmillan made similar comments after his otherwise sterile visit to Moscow in 1959. With these two exceptions, British governments placed little public emphasis on 'trans-national' contacts with the Eastern bloc, although as one diplomat later noted, in London 'a sort of philosophy was crystallising about the advantages to be derived from a programme of exchanges'. The Soviets had an interest in developing trading contacts with the West, thus gaining access to consumer goods and sophisticated technology, while from the UK's perspective commercial contacts were a means of encouraging internal change in the Eastern bloc.[67] The idea that the influence of Communist ideology on the policies of the Soviet bloc states would gradually diminish had been expressed by Churchill and the PUSD in the early 1950s. A decade later, this presumption that the Communist states would slowly liberalise their Stalinist political and economic systems influenced Foreign Office thinking on the long-term future of the Soviet bloc.

[66] Hennessy draws a contrast between the low-key British approach to the 'positive vetting' of officials occupying sensitive posts in Whitehall with the atmosphere of anti-Communist hysteria in Washington during the early 1950s. See *Secret State*, pp.86-97.
[67] D. Wilson, 'Anglo-Soviet Relations', pp.386-387. SC(67)17, **FCO49/58**(PRO).

CHAPTER 2: 'FORWARD FROM SOCIALISM ?'. BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE USSR AND THE COMMUNIST WORLD IN 1964.

By early 1964, the British and other Western governments had concluded that international tensions had eased considerably since the Cuban crisis. As far as British officials were concerned, internal developments within the USSR and Eastern Europe had a wider impact on East-West relations. Before analysing Whitehall's analysis of Eastern bloc affairs, it is worth summarising domestic developments in the Soviet bloc prior to Khrushchev's overthrow (October 1964). Nikita Khrushchev had presided over the 'de-Stalinization' of the Soviet system, and had denounced his predecessor's reign of terror in the 'secret speech' at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956. Khrushchev was of course constrained by his intention to preserve the CPSU's authority and by his association with Stalin's brutal regime, and although he curbed the powers of the secret police (the KGB), freed thousands of political prisoners and granted limited cultural freedoms, the USSR remained a totalitarian state. De-Stalinization also posed problems for Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. In 1956, Khrushchev grudgingly acquiesced in Gomulka's rise to power as the price for preserving Communism in Poland, but had also shown by his response to the Hungarian rising that the USSR would use force to prevent any challenge to its hegemony over Eastern Europe.[1]

[1] Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.339-346. Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.283-303.

Having assumed complete control over the party and government by 1957, Khrushchev initiated ambitious economic and agrarian programmes, notably the 'Virgin Lands' scheme which opened large tracts of Siberia and Kazakhstan to agricultural cultivation. At the 22nd CPSU Congress (November 1961), he boasted that the USSR would overtake the USA in industrial productivity by the end of the 1960s, and that by 1980 the Soviet system would have established a truly 'Communist' society. This image of the USSR's economic and technological prowess had been strengthened by the launch of the *Sputnik* satellite in 1957. However, the Soviet economy suffered not only from the efforts to reach military parity with the USA, but because of the failure of Khrushchev's agricultural policies. The 'Virgin Lands' scheme led to widespread soil erosion, the effects of which were exacerbated by poor harvests. Food shortages contributed to outbursts of public unrest and an uprising in the South Russian city of Novocherkassk (June 1962). In 1963, the USSR was obliged to import grain from the West, which was costly in terms of both foreign exchange expenditure and Soviet prestige. Within Eastern Europe, there was also growing awareness of the contrast between the Soviet bloc's austerity and the prosperity of the West European states. The East European regimes responded to de-Stalinization in different ways. The Albanians revolted against Soviet 'revisionism' and declared their loyalty to Stalinist orthodoxy, while the Romanians combined rigid domestic totalitarianism with a more assertive, nationalistic approach to intra-bloc relations. In Hungary, Janos Kadar curbed the repressive measures which had followed the rising of 1956, introducing economic and social reforms which eventually acquired for his

country a reputation as 'the happiest barrack in the Socialist camp'. By contrast, the Gomulka regime in Poland, having ended the collectivisation of agriculture and after granting considerable concessions to the intelligentsia and the Catholic Church, became progressively more authoritarian.[2]

In London, the JIC commented that while Khrushchev's grasp on power appeared secure, the problem of who would succeed him was 'a potentially disruptive force' which could provoke a power struggle within the CPSU *Politburo* during his lifetime. The JIC's analysts considered Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin as the most likely rivals for the succession, but acknowledged that Khrushchev could at any time expel both men from the *Politburo*. As a consequence of the USSR's economic plight, the Soviet leadership was obliged to 'adapt its policies to the realities of life', and the JIC concluded that as the regime exploited new technological developments to increase industrial productivity, a more technocratic managerial class would emerge, favouring a more 'efficient and less regimented' social order. There would also be greater popular demand for increased consumer goods production and improvements in housing and welfare, and the CPSU would have to adapt in order to survive these trends.[3] British diplomats at the Moscow embassy were aware of the failings of the Soviet economy. The ambassador, Humphrey Trevelyan, quipped that 'Khrushchev's achievement was to sow wheat in Siberia and harvest it in Canada', while the

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[2] Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.349-352, pp.361-364, p.375. G. Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union*, (HarperCollins 1992), pp.352-353, pp.388-389. Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.307-308, pp.311-314, pp.316-319.
[3] JIC(64)43, *The Power Struggle in the Soviet Union and the Problem of Succession*, 17.4.64, **CAB158/53**(PRO).

minister at the embassy, Thomas Brimelow, stated that the 'massive inertia, conservatism and inefficiency of the Soviet system' would be impediments to necessary reform.[4] The USSR's economic plight, according to British assessments, had their implications for the conduct of Soviet policy, which are noted below.

British and Western assessments of Soviet intentions and capabilities in 1964.

The point of departure for official British analyses of Soviet policy was, unsurprisingly, the build-up of the USSR's nuclear arsenal, and the fact that the Soviet leadership had at its disposal an army approximately 140 divisions strong. Ninety of these divisions were deployed facing NATO (either in East-Central Europe or in the Western military districts of the USSR), 60 of which were manned at full strength. JIC estimates also took into account the enhanced combat readiness of the WTO armed forces, notably the East Germans, Czechoslovaks and Poles. In addition, the USSR was an emerging maritime power, with the second largest navy in the world (five times the tonnage of the Royal Navy). The Soviets had increased their military aid to powers such as Cuba and Indonesia, and had also enlarged their merchant and fishing fleets, while conducting hydrological surveys across the world. These actions had strategic implications - the trawlers and merchant ships shadowing Western fleets also had a role gathering signals intelligence (SIGINT), while the hydrological surveys provided vital data for naval

[4] T. Brimelow (Moscow) to E. Orchard (ND), 6.3.64, NS1015/11, **FO371/177664**(PRO). H. Trevelyan to P. Gordon-Walker, 1.1.65, **FO371/182741**(PRO).

operations. The USSR's maritime capabilities remained inferior to those of the USA, particularly in anti-submarine capabilities, access to port facilities overseas, and in naval air strength. However, the Soviets used their growing maritime power to demonstrate their superpower status, and the provision of Soviet naval vessels to Indonesia was - in the context of the latter's 'confrontation' with Malaysia - particularly disconcerting for the UK.[5]

As noted in the previous chapter, British military and intelligence officials concluded in 1961 that the Soviets were highly unlikely to risk the consequences of deliberate aggression against the West. Soviet military doctrine had no concept of 'limited war', and stipulated that in the event of a general East-West conflict the USSR would use nuclear weapons from the outset. This would, however, lead to the mutual destruction of both the Western and Soviet bloc powers, and the JIC remained convinced that the Soviets would be deterred from launching a Third World War. Three years after the Mottershead report, the COS were confident that the only contingencies NATO needed to prepare for (other than a nuclear response to a general WTO offensive) were 'accidental' border clashes or probing attacks initiated by the Soviets to test the Alliance's resolve (the chiefs presumably considered it possible that the Soviets could change their minds about the risks of limited war). The COS's assessment of what would follow displayed the belief that any conflict with the Soviet bloc could be controlled:

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[5] JIC(64)18(Final), *Soviet Bloc General Purpose Forces Confronting NATO*, 1.9.64, **CAB158/52**(PRO). JIC(64)92(Final), *Soviet Maritime Policy*, 5.3.64, **CAB158/55**(PRO). On Soviet maritime SIGINT, see J. Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, (London; Century 2001), p.93. On the 'confrontation', see D. Easter, *British Defence Policy in South East Asia and the confrontation, 1960-66*, (PhD Thesis, London School of Economics 1998).

> [After] a short phase of non-nuclear operations to identify the aim and scope of Soviet aggression, [if we] were unable to stop [the enemy] by non-nuclear weapons, tactical nuclear weapons would have to be used. Concurrently with these operations, political negotiations would be aimed at convincing the Soviets of NATO's resolve to defend itself and of the dangers of escalation, possibly uncontrolled, to the strategic nuclear exchange.

The service chiefs were nonetheless convinced that, to quote the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Lord Mountbatten, 'there is no Soviet objective in Europe which they consider worth the devastating price they would pay in their attempt to achieve it'.[6] Recent research supports the assessment that WTO war planning at this time involved the instant use of nuclear weapons in any war against NATO, although given this intention the confidence the chiefs showed towards controlling the escalation of an East-West war was excessively optimistic.[7] The strategic concepts summarised above influenced the British attitude towards NATO's strategic review. While British and American opinion differed with regards to the force levels NATO needed to deter Soviet aggression, both Washington and London were agreed by 1964 that the USSR was unwilling to provoke a nuclear holocaust.[8]

American impressions of Soviet policy were reflected by one National Intelligence Estimate compiled in February 1964, which commented that as a consequence of setbacks over Berlin and Cuba Khrushchev considered the 'present

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[6] JIC(64)18(Final), **CAB158/52**(PRO). DP33/64(Final), 26.4.64, **DEFE4/168**(PRO). COS245/64, 26.8.64, **DEFE5/153**(PRO). CDS' comments at COS63rd/64 meeting, 27.10.64, **DEFE4/176**(PRO).

[7] See V. Mastny (ed.), 'Taking Lyon on the Ninth Day? The Warsaw Pact Plan for a Nuclear War in Europe and Related Documents', found on the website for *Parallel History Project* for NATO and the Warsaw Pact, http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php/documents, downloaded 30.05.00. Also P. Lunak, 'Planning for Nuclear War: The Czechoslovak War Plan of 1964', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 12/13 (Autumn/Winter 2001), pp.289-298.

[8] The adoption of 'flexible response' is examined in detail in J. Stromseth's *The Origins of Flexible Response. NATO's Debate over strategy in the 1960s*, (Macmillan 1988).

period inauspicious for direct pressures against the West' and had established 'the relaxation of tensions as the main theme of his [foreign] policy'. Due to the scale of the USSR's internal economic problems - agricultural failures, slow economic growth, and hard currency shortages following the import of Western cereals - the Soviets had an interest not only in easing the burden of military expenditure, but also in developing trade ties with the West and in securing foreign credits. However, American analysts asserted that Khrushchev's less strident policies were also intended to 'aggravate Western differences, which tend to emerge more strongly when the Soviet threat appears to fade'. Moscow still supported 'wars of national liberation' and anti-Western regimes in the Third World, and Khrushchev evidently expected that *détente* would enable the USSR to 'exploit unstable situations' in the Southern hemisphere. There was a constituency of opinion in Washington that presumed that Moscow's interest in *détente* was not 'likely to evolve over a longer time into a more serious search for basic settlements with the West', unless there were 'fundamental changes' in Soviet ideology and the USSR's outlook on international politics.[9] Foreign Office officials likewise concluded that as a result of the USSR's domestic problems, as well as the diplomatic defeats over Berlin and Cuba, Soviet foreign policy would be passive and reactive. Moscow would not make, or respond to, any major initiatives on disarmament or the solution of the German problem, but on the other hand the

[9] NIE11-5-64, *Soviet Economic Problems and Outlook*, 8.1.64; NIE11-9-64, *Soviet Foreign Policy*, 19.2.64; & NIE11-4-64, *Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy*, 19.2.64, in *The Soviet Estimate: US Analysis of the Soviet Union 1947-1991*, (microfiche) Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), **MFF15/390-392**.

Soviets would also avoid provocations which could lead to a crisis as serious as that over Cuba in 1962.[10]

By 1964, the Sino-Soviet schism was, in the opinion of British embassy officials in Moscow, irreversible. The basic causes of the split involved fundamental divisions over *détente*, which the Soviets accepted as a tactical necessity but the Chinese abhorred, and the competition between the two powers for leadership of the Communist world. The mutual contempt between Khrushchev and Mao Zedong exacerbated this ideological rift.[11] By 1963, the Americans were aware of this split, by which time China was considered by Washington to be 'a more bellicose and unmanageable international actor' than the USSR. The PRC became, as one historian notes, 'the primary international devil' as far as both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were concerned.[12] The US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, asserted in December 1964 that while the 'Warsaw Pact-NATO relationship was not now likely to lead to war', Chinese ambitions in South-East Asia posed a threat to peace, and he complained that 'the Free World had simply not lifted up its voice as it should as a signal and warning' to Beijing.[13] Rusk's comments reflected the Johnson administration's view of the PRC as 'a reckless power', which had 'usurped the role of the Soviet Union in American perceptions

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[10] *Trends and Implications of Soviet Policy. April-November 1964*, NS1022/19, **FO371/177670**(PRO). *Remarks to Commonwealth PMs on Overall East-West Relations*, 8.7.64, N1075/1, **FO371/177420**(PRO).
[11] Moscow to FO, No.711, 17.4.64, NS1072/23, **FO371/177670**(PRO). See C. Pleshakov, 'Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations'; Chen Jian & Yang Kuisong, 'Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance', in O. Westad, *Brothers in Arms. The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance*, (Washington DC; Woodrow Wilson Center Press 2000), pp.226-294.
[12] N. Kochavi, 'Washington's view of the Sino-Soviet split, 1961-1963: From Puzzled Prudence to Bold Experimentation', in *Intelligence and National Security*, 15/1 (2000), pp.50-79.
[13] Anglo-American Ministerial conversations at White House, 7.12.64, National Security Files (**NSF**), UK Country File Box 214 (UKCF214), Lyndon B. Johnson Library (LBJLIB).

as their most troublesome adversary'. The Vietnam war and the development of the Chinese nuclear programme subsequently reinforced this perception.[14]

For the British, the implications of the Sino-Soviet split were not as clear-cut or as favourable as the prospect of continued feuding between the Communist giants appeared to suggest. Foreign Office officials concluded that although it was conceivable that the Soviets would 'limit the field of disagreement' with the Western powers in order to 'gain a freer hand to deal with the Chinese challenge', it would be 'premature to conclude that a complete reorientation of Soviet policy towards the West is in prospect', except possibly in the distant future when China emerged as a major military threat. British officials were also wary of any obvious efforts to exacerbate the Sino-Soviet split, which in their opinion would encourage a rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing.[15] In addition, the Soviet leadership was asserting the USSR's 'anti-imperialist' credentials and its support for 'national liberation' movements so as to counter Chinese efforts to supplant Moscow's influence in the Third World. The CPSU's chief ideologist, Mikhail Suslov, condemned Beijing for its exclusive attacks on American 'imperialism', and he declared that 'the Soviet struggle against imperialism embraces not only [that of] the United States but also that of England, France, West Germany and Japan'. While the Soviet press assailed the UK for its 'East of Suez' policy, Moscow provided military aid to the Indonesia and

[14] M. Jones, ''Groping Toward Coexistence': US China Policy during the Johnson Years', in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 12/3 (2001), p.175.
[15] **DEFE4/174**(PRO). FO brief for Sir Alec Douglas-Home's visit to Washington, 3.2.64, N1015/5, **FO371/177409**(PRO). FO to Missions, N.349 Guidance, 1.6.64, N1051/21, **FO371/177410**(PRO).

gave its President, Ahmed Sukarno, moral support for his attempts to destabilise Malaysia. The Conservative Foreign Secretary, R. A. Butler, was warned by his officials in April 1964 that Chinese ideological challenge served only to intensify Soviet efforts to supplant Western influence in the underdeveloped world.[16]

The general Foreign Office view was summarised by one senior Northern Department official who commented that although the USSR remained committed to the expansion of international Communism, 'the more important facts, absolutely and for our own foreign policy, are the postponement of [this objective] and the mitigation of the Cold War atmosphere'.[17] The problem for the UK and for the West in general was how to ensure that *détente* in the mid-1960s did not suffer the same fate as the elusive 'spirit of Geneva' of the previous decade. British officials were also debating the appropriate response to de-Stalinization in Eastern Europe.

A theory of 'evolution': British policy towards the Eastern bloc in 1964.

Within the Foreign Office, the PUSD examined Britain's policy towards the East European states, revising a paper entitled *United Kingdom Policy towards the Satellites* produced by its Planning Staff in June 1961. This paper had concluded that although Soviet hegemony and Communist power over the Eastern European

[16] H. Smith (ND) to R. A. Butler, 20.3.64, NS1022/17: & Moscow to FO, No.608, 3.4.64, NS1022/22, **FO371/177610**(PRO). Tokyo to FO, No.277, 3.4.64, NS1022/32, **FO371/177671**(PRO).
[17] D. Wilson (ND), *Soviet Intentions*, 12.9.64, PLA13/7, **FO371/177821**(PRO).

region had been consolidated, the ruling regimes faced widespread popular discontent which had led to open revolt in 1956. This unrest had been temporarily appeased by improved living standards and greater access to consumer goods. Furthermore, as a result of 'de-Stalinization' in the 1950s, Communist leaders who favoured reform had more lee-way to devise less doctrinaire economic policies. The Soviets would tolerate these limited reforms so long as the bloc regimes did not attempt to break free from the 'Socialist Commonwealth', and Planning Staff officials concluded that 'if there is to be any weakening of the Soviet hold over the Satellites it will come about through *evolution* rather than *revolution*'.

The planners argued that the policy of the UK and other Western powers should aim 'to encourage favourable evolutionary trends, particularly by fostering a spirit of nationalism in the Satellites and [by] playing up to their sense of national identity'. Such an approach would produce few tangible results in the short-term, but Planning Staff officials concluded that in order to assist the long-term process of 'evolution' the West needed to develop 'closer relations with the [Communist] regimes' while increasing its cultural contacts and improving 'information work' directed at the East European peoples. This involved British Council representation and BBC broadcasts on the one hand, and the IRD's propaganda on a more covert level. The Planning Staff maintained that 'there need not be any incompatibility' between efforts to improve inter-government relations between the UK and the bloc states, and efforts to develop East-West contacts on an informal level which would indirectly stimulate popular pressure for internal

reform. *United Kingdom Policy towards the Satellites* was approved by the PUSD, and formed the basis of British policy towards Eastern Europe until 1964, when Northern Department officials argued for a re-examination of policy towards the Soviet bloc.[18] The Planning Staff's revised assessment, *Policy Towards the East European Satellites* (27 January 1964), is summarised below.

The planners began by stating that in mid-1961, there was a major East-West crisis over the future of Berlin, while Poland was the only Communist state other than Yugoslavia to follow 'an independent approach to Communism'. Two and a half year's later, most of the Eastern bloc states had 'taken advantage in varying degrees of the rather greater freedom of political and economic action permitted' both by the development of *détente* and the doctrine of 'separate roads to Socialism' approved at the 22nd CPSU Congress. Most East European regimes had relaxed centralised economic control, permitted 'rather more freedom of choice to the consumer and [of] thought to the intellectual', and had limited hitherto arbitrary police powers. The extent of these changes differed according to each state, but in general the bloc states had instituted economic and social reforms in order to avert uprisings similar to those in Hungary and Poland in 1956. In foreign affairs, the ruling regimes remained aligned with the USSR and committed to the Warsaw Pact, but in internal affairs the East Europeans had more freedom

[18] SC(61)25, *United Kingdom Policy towards the Satellites*, 27.6.61, emphasis added; & note by C. Tickell (Planning Staff), 24.1.64, PLA13/1, **FO371/177821**(PRO). Foreign Office officials used the word 'liberalisation' to describe the process of internal political and economic reform in Eastern Europe although, as shown below, 'liberalisation' was also used to describe efforts to increase British trade with Eastern bloc states by reducing import quotas. I have chosen to use the phrase 'liberalisation' as well as 'democratisation' and 'internal reform' to describe efforts by certain East European regimes - notably the Poles, Hungarians and Czechoslovaks - to modify central economic planning and great greater individual freedoms to their subjects. I will use 'liberalisation' in both the political and (in discussing trading relations) in its commercial context.

to develop autonomous policies than during the Stalinist era. Having borne the brunt of popular unrest eight years previously, the Polish and Hungarian Communist parties had made the most progress in relaxing state censorship and limiting secret police authority. The Romanian regime had adopted an avowedly nationalist character which had led Bucharest to undermine Soviet efforts to grant the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) greater supra-national authority over the economic policies of its members.

Most of the Eastern bloc states had experimented with more liberal socio-economic policies, and were more interested in trading with the West. Pro-reform leaders were encouraged by Khrushchev's efforts to improve the USSR's relations with Yugoslavia, and by the Sino-Soviet split. Although Albania was alone in siding with the Chinese - and was, unlike the other East European states, paradoxically breaking off relations with the USSR *and* resisting de-Stalinization - the USSR's allies would seek Soviet acquiescence for their internal reforms in return for their continued adherence to the ideological line set by Moscow. However, the USSR was still determined to preserve its hegemony over the region and to preserve its client regimes. If either of these objectives were threatened, the Soviets would crush any popular revolt by force. Furthermore, although most of the East European regimes saw the need for improved living standards and less repressive policies to gain popular acquiescence towards Communist rule, the ruling parties would be wary of undertaking systematic reforms which would undermine their 'leading role'. Ulbricht and the East German leadership were particularly

determined to insulate the GDR from the more prosperous FRG, and East Berlin was especially hostile to internal reforms in neighbouring bloc states. Above all, the East European countries were economically dependant upon the USSR - particularly the supply of raw materials and energy - and also relied upon the WTO for their military security. Poland and Czechoslovakia in particular feared that 'a strong and rearmed West Germany' could drag NATO 'into a war for the revision of Germany's Eastern frontiers'. Foreign Office officials clearly considered that the fear of West German 'revanchism' was 'a genuinely national rather than a merely Communist feeling', which 'must be taken into account in any estimate of the possibilities of political change in Eastern Europe'.

Policy Towards the East European Satellites concluded by refining the Planning Staff's 1961 assessment on the internal 'evolution' of the Eastern bloc, and on the means available to the Western powers to encourage this gradual liberalisation. In the short-term, it was 'most unlikely' that the Eastern bloc's economic problems and the exacerbation of Sino-Soviet tensions would lead to an East-West rapprochement. The USSR was in no mood to renounce its ideological hostility towards the Western world, and the East Europeans could not be 'bribed or otherwise persuaded out of the Soviet camp' by Western trade or economic assistance. There was also no sign that the Communist order was on the verge of collapse, or that the USSR would remain passive if its authority over Eastern Europe disintegrated. The most likely short-term outcome was, officials concluded, the continuation of 'evolutionary co-existence' between the Eastern bloc and the

West, in which the 'rather greater freedom and will to develop contacts with the West' would be 'balanced, but not entirely countered' by Soviet efforts to integrate the East European economies through the CMEA, and 'by the natural conservatism of the Communist party leaders and functionaries'. British policy should remain focused upon encouraging 'evolution' in the long-term, not only by developing cultural contacts, but by increasing the number of Ministerial visits to Eastern Europe, and by reducing discriminatory import quotas on Eastern bloc goods so as to improve trading relations. These measures were not expected to reverse the economic dependence and ideological orientation of the East European countries, but were intended to foster goodwill by treating the latter as sovereign states, rather than as mere puppets of the USSR.[19]

This concept of 'evolution' provided the basis not only for Foreign Office proposals to liberalise Britain's trade with bloc states, but also for efforts to improve political relations and develop *détente* with the Warsaw Pact powers. Foreign Office officials argued that it was no longer appropriate to call the Eastern bloc states 'satellites', and asserted that the British government should be 'ready to discuss seriously with [the East Europeans] our attitude on major policy questions, even if we have little hope of thereby changing their attitude'.[20] Poland was regarded as a strong candidate for bilateral political contacts because of the disarmament initiatives associated with both Gomulka and Rapacki. In addition, the Polish regime was reputed to be distinctly less totalitarian than those of other

[19] SC(64)1, *Policy Towards the East European Satellites*, 27.1.64, PLA13/2, **FO371/177821**(PRO).
[20] Northern Department note, 11.6.65; & E. Youde (ND), 16.6.65, **FO371/182529**(PRO). See FO to Missions, No.349 Guidance, 1.6.64, **FO371/177410**(PRO), which is in Appendix 1.

Soviet bloc states. As one British diplomat stationed in Warsaw from 1959 to 1961 recalled, Poland was 'the only communist country where [Western diplomats] could talk to people, including party officials and senior figures', without the restrictions other East European states imposed on contacts between their own subjects and foreigners.[21] However, Poland's reputation as a comparatively liberal state in Eastern Europe proved to be ephemeral, as Gomulka's regime became more hard-line during the 1960s.

The JIC agreed with the assessment that 'nearly all of the former "satellites" now enjoy some degree of independence from the Soviet Union', although its analysts noted that this 'growing diversity and fluidity within the Soviet bloc' could prove short-lived if *détente* collapsed and East-West rivalries intensified.[22] The PUSD approved the conclusions of *Policy Towards the East European Satellites*, which received further support from the meeting of British ambassadors to the USSR and Eastern Europe, which was convened in London in April 1964. A summary of the Foreign Office's views on 'evolution' was forwarded to Patrick Gordon-Walker shortly after he replaced Butler as Foreign Secretary six months later. This memorandum acknowledged that Khrushchev's downfall had not been taken into account, but concluded that his successors would

[21] Interview with R. Braithwaite, p.2, **DOHP**. C. Thompson (ND) to J. Whitehead (Washington), 20.10.64, N1015/22, **FO371/177407**(PRO).
[22] JIC(64)25(Final), *Relations between the Soviet Union and Communist Countries in Eastern Europe*, 17.7.64, **CAB158/52**(PRO).

not crack down on liberalisation within Eastern Europe unless the USSR's political and military supremacy over the region was threatened.[23]

The conclusions of *Policy Towards the East European Satellites* - particularly concerning the increased autonomy of the bloc states and the enhanced freedom of manoeuvre resulting from the USSR's preoccupation with its ideological rivalry with the PRC - were not unique to the Foreign Office and were noted by contemporary academic specialists.[24] It is also worth noting that, despite the references to 'information work', British officials remained unwilling to openly encourage anti-Communist rebellions behind the 'Iron Curtain', on the grounds that any Western effort 'to set the governments and peoples of Eastern Europe against the Soviet Union' would 'be self-defeating and would lead to sharp reactions'. As a consequence, there were limits imposed on the IRD's propaganda effort, because although PUSD officials considered it important 'to encourage the desire of East European countries to liberalise their regimes, to concentrate more on their national interests and to reach a less subservient relationship with Moscow', British policy objectives did not include stimulating 'such a move for independence as would provoke Moscow to intervention to protect Soviet strategic interests'.[25] These conclusions were much the same as those of PUSC(51)16 twelve years previously, and British remained opposed to

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[23] Conclusions of HM Ambassadors' conference on Eastern Europe, 21-23.4.64, N1015/31, **FO371/177405**(PRO). H. Smith (ND) to P. Gordon-Walker, 19.10.64, N1051/G, **FO371/177410**(PRO).
[24] For instance, see G. Ionescu, *The break-up of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe*, (London; Penguin 1965), pp.150-157; & D. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-61*, (Princeton University Press 1967), pp.394-401.
[25] FO to Missions, No.349 Guidance, **FO371/177410**(PRO). SC(64)20, *Current Trends in the policy of Communist powers and implications for our propaganda*, 1.5.64, PLA13/4, **FO371/177821**(PRO).

covert operations in Eastern Europe similar to the half-hearted Anglo-American efforts of the previous decade.

While Foreign Office officials were agreed that the Eastern bloc was gradually becoming less totalitarian and less doctrinaire, most tended to be cautious as far as the pace of 'evolution' was concerned. One exception was the assistant undersecretary of the Northern Department responsible for Soviet affairs, Duncan Wilson, the author of a paper entitled *Forward From Socialism ?*. Duncan Wilson's opinions are worth noting because of his subsequent service as ambassador to Belgrade (September 1964-October 1968) and then to Moscow. *Forward from Socialism* was based on the presumption that East-West *détente* would continue, despite continued ideological rivalry, and that neither de-Stalinization nor the Sino-Soviet schism could be reversed. The Eastern bloc regimes were obliged not only to introduce limited concessions to the free market, but also to increase their trade with the Western 'capitalists'. The process of reform was driven by popular cynicism towards the ruling regimes, the readiness of pro-reform Communists and technocrats to respond to new ideas, and by the increased contacts between Soviet bloc states and the outside world. On the other hand, the Communist parties intended to preserve their monopoly of power, and there were still no political alternatives to challenge the established order. Above all, there was the popular fear that uncontrolled liberalisation could provoke Soviet military intervention and savage repression. Duncan Wilson referred to the possibility of a 'freeze' in reform in either Hungary or Poland, but he was confident that in the long-term

the East European regimes would gradually develop their own variants of 'national Communism'. The increased debate within the Communist parties on economic policy, greater freedom of expression and, ultimately, improved contacts with the Western powers would - assuming East-West *détente* continued to develop - lead the East Europeans to become more pragmatic in the conduct of foreign policy. He conceded that the evidence for his thesis was not conclusive, but that gradual change offered a better alternative to continued unrest, anti-Communist revolutions and a ruthless Soviet crackdown in the region.[26]

Forward from Socialism envisaged the development of 'national Communism' in each Eastern bloc state, with the regimes following Yugoslavia's lead by developing autonomous policies suited to socio-economic conditions in their own countries. Given Khrushchev's tolerance of Tito, and the improvement of Soviet-Yugoslav relations since Stalin's death, Duncan Wilson presumed that the Soviets would show similar restraint in dealing with states closer to the USSR's borders. Other officials were less convinced. The PUSD's Steering Committee were sceptical of the extent to which 'national Communism could develop' - Communist parties still looked to either Moscow or Beijing for leadership, and so long as bloc states continued to adhere to the objective of a Communist world, even 'national Communism' posed a threat to Western interests. Trevelyan regarded *Forward from Socialism* as too sanguine, arguing that although the Soviets were suffering from 'an economic malaise' as a result of Khrushchev's mismanagement, '[ideology], bureaucracy and the need to maintain the balance of military power'

[26] D. Wilson (ND), *Forward from Socialism ?*, 4.2.64, N1015/4 & 6, **FO371/177404**(PRO).

with the USA 'will all exercise a strong conservative influence on Soviet policy' and would forestall internal reforms. The CPSU was determined to maintain its 'leading role', and while the German question remained unresolved the Soviets would never relax their grip on the East European states. As a consequence, the USSR would not tolerate political pluralism in any of the Eastern bloc states. Trevelyan also suggested that Duncan Wilson's confidence in the ability of the Soviet bloc regimes to limited reforms without provoking popular demands for more radical changes was misplaced, and he commented that there could be future outbreaks of unrest, such as those experienced in East Berlin in 1953, in Poland and Hungary three years later, and in Novocherkassk in 1962. Trevelyan's comments raised the question of whether the USSR would tolerate the limited liberalisation of its East European clients, particularly if reforms threatened to arouse similar demands for change within the Soviet system itself. Furthermore, despite the fact that Khrushchev was more conciliatory in his dealings with Tito than Stalin was, Yugoslav 'revisionism' was explicitly condemned at the 22nd CPSU Congress.[27]

Over the previous decade, the British government had been at odds with other allied powers over the interpretation of Soviet policy and concerning developments in the Communist world - the disputes which arose during the Berlin crisis being one obvious example. Yet by 1964, other Western policy-makers had concluded that the prospects for *détente* had improved. De Gaulle firmly

[27] SC(64)20, **FO371/177821**(PRO). Comments by H. Trevelyan (Moscow) on *Forward from Socialism ?*, 27.2.64, N1015/21, **FO371/177405**(PRO). Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p.362.

backed Adenauer during the Berlin crisis, but three years after its climax the French President spoke of a '*Europe totale*', unencumbered by ideological divisions and stretching 'from the Atlantic to the Urals'. De Gaulle's idiosyncratic vision of *détente* was the mirror image of his objective of undermining American influence and of promoting France as the diplomatic centre of Western Europe. He asserted that 'Russian' national interests would eventually prevail over Communist ideology, and that as the USSR became preoccupied with the threat posed by an increasingly hostile China, Moscow would be ready to consider a European settlement. The French President was convinced that the Soviet threat would disappear, along with the Communist order in Eastern Europe, and that this trend would deprive NATO of its rationale. Once the US-led Atlantic Alliance would collapse, France would be left to act as Western Europe's spokesman in negotiations with 'Russia'. De Gaulle considered this outcome to be inevitable, informing the US ambassador to Paris that the growth of East-West trade would result in 'the end of Communism as the Soviets now conceive it'.[28] De Gaulle had developed his own concept of 'evolution', albeit one far more grandiose and more ambitious than that of the Foreign Office's Planning Staff.

Following the Hungarian revolt, American 'roll back' rhetoric was replaced by a more low-key policy towards Eastern Europe, which focused on 'softening' the ruling regimes by cultural and commercial contacts. President Johnson inherited the policy of developing *détente* with the USSR which Kennedy had followed

[28] Paris to State Dept., No.3517, 11.12.64; & No.4359, 2.2.65, *Lyndon Johnson National Security Files. Western Europe 1963-1969* (microfilm), LHCMA, **MF403**. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, pp.393-398, pp.401-402. G. Soutou, 'France and the Cold War, 1944-63', in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 12/4 (2001), p.41. pp.48-49.

before his untimely death. Consciously or not, Johnson employed a Khrushchevite metaphor when he told the Soviet ambassador, Anatolii Dobrynin, that '[we] do not want to bury the Soviet Union, but at the same time we do not want to be buried'. In his 'bridge-building speech' at Lexington, Virginia (May 1964), the President also declared his interest in establishing stronger cultural and commercial relations between the USA and Eastern Europe.[29] Some of Johnson's officials hoped to exploit the Eastern bloc's economic difficulties for political leverage, arguing that it was folly for the USA to trade with the Soviets while the latter used aid to the Third World to enhance their influence overseas. The prevailing view - as expressed by Rusk and McGeorge Bundy (Johnson's special assistant for national security affairs) - was that restrictions on 'non-strategic' trade with the Eastern bloc not only undermined the administration's 'bridge-building' pledges, but also gave West European and Japanese firms a commercial advantage over American businesses attempting to establish a foothold in trade with Eastern Europe.[30] Johnson was evidently impressed by these arguments, because a few months after his landslide victory in the November 1964 Presidential election he established the Miller Committee to 'explore all aspects of the question of expanding peaceful trade' with the Eastern bloc countries to support the administration's declared aim of improving East-West relations.[31] The committee's final report (March 1965) recommended the passage of a trade bill through

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[29] Bekes, *Hungarian Revolution*, p.24. National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 304, 3.6.64, *FRUS XVII 1964-1968, Eastern Europe*, p.12. Anatolii Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, (NY; Random House 1995), pp.128-129.
[30] Export Control Review Board meeting, 20.1.64; & M. Bundy to Johnson, 14.4.64, *FRUS IX. International Development and Economic Defense Policy*, (Washington 1997), pp.446-449, pp.452-453.
[31] Bundy to Johnson, 17.2.65; & NSAM No.324, 9.3.65, *FRUS IX*, pp.481-482, pp.484-485. The Miller Committee was named after its chairman, J. Irwin Miller.

Congress, but the Johnson administration's 'bridge-building' objectives were subsequently thwarted as a result of the Vietnam war.

To summarize, by mid-1964 Foreign Office officials had concluded that the East European states were undergoing a process of 'evolution' from rigid, monolithic Stalinism towards a less repressive and more autonomous 'polycentric' order, with greater scope for reform in individual states. The means available to Western powers to encourage 'evolution' were limited to trade, cultural exchanges, and Ministerial visits, but these would in the long-term help develop *détente* and would assist East European efforts to gain greater independence from the USSR. It should also be noted that Washington and Paris derived similar conclusions on developments within the Eastern bloc. Having discussed official British attitudes towards de-Stalinization, it is now necessary to turn to Harold Wilson's views on developments in the Communist world.

Harold Wilson and East-West relations: 1947-1964.

Apart from party-political loyalties, the principal difference between Wilson and his Conservative predecessors was that because of his pre-parliamentary career in academia and the civil service he had considerable experience of socio-economic issues, but showed less interest in diplomatic or military affairs. This aspect of his character was demonstrated by his peripheral role in Labour's debates during the

1950s on nuclear deterrence and disengagement in Europe. Wilson's alignment with the Labour left began when he resigned with Bevan from the Attlee government in April 1951. Wilson's relationship with his predecessor as party leader, Hugh Gaitskell, and other leading right-wingers was coloured by intense mutual dislike. The Labour right did not consider Wilson to be a pro-Communist 'fellow-traveller' (as was suspected of other left-wing MPs) but considered him to be a shameless opportunist with neither fixed beliefs nor a sense of loyalty, hence George Brown's bitter comment 'If we have to die in the last ditch Harold won't be there. He will have scrambled out'.[32]

This animosity is worth noting because after his election to the party leadership in January 1963 Wilson appointed many of his old adversaries to the shadow Cabinet. After October 1964 the right-wingers held the main Ministerial posts. Brown became First Secretary of State in the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), James Callaghan became Chancellor, Douglas Jay was appointed President of the Board of Trade, Patrick Gordon-Walker became Foreign Secretary and Denis Healey was the Defence Secretary throughout Labour's term in office. Wilson's promotion of his old enemies was partly a measure to preserve party unity, but was also intended to play his rivals off against each other. This was significant because the uneasy relationship between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues reinforced what David Bruce, the US ambassador to London, referred to as Wilson's 'lone wolf' tendency. Another senior American official, the

[32] A. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, (Longman 1997), p.142. Brown's comments are in R. Pearce (ed.), *Patrick Gordon-Walker. Political Diaries 1932-1971*, (London; Historians' Press 1991), 2.6.60, p.267.

Under-Secretary of State George Ball, observed that Wilson was 'on guard in the presence of his own Cabinet colleagues'.[33] Barbara Castle, a left-wing Minister and one of Wilson's allies, noted that the Prime Minister spoke in 'casual, throwaway tones' in Cabinet meetings, as if to dull the atmosphere and forestall debate. Under Wilson, decision-making was devolved from the Cabinet to either *ad hoc* committees or standing committees such as Overseas Policy and Defence (OPD).[34] The Prime Minister took considerable care to conceal his thoughts from his colleagues. Nonetheless, with regards to his impression of the USSR and his view of East-West relations, it is possible to draw some conclusions from both his career and his public pronouncements.

As a Minister in the Board of Trade in 1947, Wilson led a delegation to Moscow that April to negotiate an Anglo-Soviet trade treaty. As an opposition MP he was an 'economic advisor' for the timber firm Montague Meyer Ltd, for whom he paid a series of visits to the USSR and other bloc states until 1959. These visits subsequently provided the basis for absurd conspiracy theories alleging that the future Prime Minister was either recruited, or blackmailed, by the KGB.[35] While Wilson clearly had no sympathy for the political aspect of Communism, his visits to the USSR convinced him that central planning enabled the Soviets to organise

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[33] D. Bruce to R. Neustadt, 6.12.64, **NSF**, UKCF216, LBJLIB. Note by Ball on conversation with Gordon-Walker & PM at No.10, 2.12.64, *FRUS XIII, Western Europe Region*, (Washington 1995), pp.130.

[34] Barbara Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-70*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1984), 28.4.66, p.119. P. Hennessy, *The Prime Minister*, (Penguin 2000), p.289. In October 1963 the Macmillan government amalgamated the Cabinet Office's Defence and Overseas Policy Committees to form the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee (DOPC). When Labour entered office the DOPC was renamed the OPD.

[35] A. Morgan provides a convincing rebuttal of these conspiracy theories in *Wilson*, pp.233-237. See also Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.698-707; & Ziegler, *Wilson*, p.501. According to one KGB defector, Soviet intelligence officers did intend to approach Wilson in order to recruit him, but '[this] development did not come to fruition'. See C. Andrew & V. Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archives*, (London, Allen Lane 1999), pp.527-528.

'their economic life in a purposeful and rational manner'. This view contrasted with that of British diplomats in Moscow, who were aware that despite Khrushchev's boasts, the USSR was in no position to overtake Western economic growth. Wilson's famous 'white heat' speech at Scarborough on the need to harness the 'scientific revolution' and adopt methods of 'democratic planning' to reverse Britain's economic decline (October 1963) owed much to his impressions of the USSR's economic and technological achievements. Wilson told Labour party members that 'those of us who have studied the formidable Soviet challenge ... know that our future lies not in military strength alone but in the efforts, the sacrifices and above all the energies which a free people can mobilise for the future greatness of our country'. This ambitious pledge to reverse the UK's post-war economic slump derived in part from the Cold War image of competition between the Communist and capitalist systems. The establishment of Mintech (Ministry of Technology) and the history of the ill-fated DEA and the abortive 'National Plan' lie outside the scope of this study, but it is sufficient to note that Wilson's impressions of the apparent successes of the Soviet command economy contributed to their creation.[36]

Wilson's visits to the USSR as a junior Minister and later as an opposition MP led him to develop his interest in East-West trade, but they also enabled him to present himself as someone who knew how to deal with the Soviet leadership. Wilson was by no means a 'fellow traveller'. He returned from the Anglo-Soviet

[36] Pimlott, *Wilson*, p.198, p.276, pp.300-305. Morgan, *People's Peace*, pp.197-200. D. Horner, 'The Road to Scarborough: Wilson, Labour and the Scientific Revolution', in *The Wilson Governments*, pp.48-68.

trade talks with a reputation as a tough negotiator who had proved to be a match for his opposite number, Anastas Mikoyan.[37] As President of the Board of Trade in 1949, Wilson suspended commercial relations with Hungary after the regime in Budapest imprisoned a British businessman, Edgar Saunders, for espionage. In the same year, Wilson also supported the Attlee government's decision to compile a list of items which British firms were forbidden to export to the Eastern bloc, an action which preceded the establishment of COCOM.[38] His early support for East-West trade was evidently not unconditional, and during the late 1940s he did not challenge Attlee and Bevin's adoption of a tough stance against the Soviet bloc. Following his resignation from the government in April 1951, Wilson's enthusiasm for trade with the Eastern bloc became more pronounced, and paralleled his protests against both rearmament and the UK's economic dependence on the USA. In a pamphlet written in 1952 entitled *In Place of Dollars*, he criticised the strategic embargo on East-West commerce, and declared that Britain needed 'greater freedom to develop trade with the non-dollar' countries in order to revive its economy. Wilson maintained that the UK could satisfy the bulk of its raw material needs by trading with the USSR and Eastern Europe, an assessment which was based on what he considered to be in Britain's economic interests. It should be noted, however, that at no point did *In Place of Dollars* acknowledge Wilson's role in imposing controls on exports to the Eastern bloc in 1949.[39]

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[37] The Board of Trade papers on the 1947 Moscow visit are in **BT11/3417 & 3472** in the PRO. Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, pp.99-102, pp.111-113. Ziegler, *Wilson*, pp.65-66. I. Roberts, *Dealing with Dictators*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson), pp.105-106.

[38] On the Saunders case, see A. Gascoigne to FO, 20.5.53, NS1631/10, **FO371/106579**(PRO). Jackson, *Economic Cold War*, p.35.

[39] Harold Wilson, *In Place of Dollars*, (London; Tribune Pamphlets 1952).

Wilson's visit to Moscow in May 1953 was one of the first undertaken by a Western politician since Stalin's death. This visit was ostensibly for business purposes, but he also had discussions with Mikoyan and with the Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov. Wilson's attempts to discuss the main political issues of the time with the Soviet leadership were, due to his lowly status, of little consequence, yet he nonetheless sent Churchill a lengthy report on his visit, commenting in detail on the 'collective leadership' and its internal policies. He argued that Stalin's successors had limited the powers of the secret police, raised living standards and seriously intended to improve their relations with the West. He improbably claimed that there was a 'Bevanite' character to the 'collective leadership', which in his opinion intended to reduce military spending in order to concentrate more on domestic problems. This comment suggests that at this time Wilson shared what one historian refers to as Bevan's 'tendency to pass off wishful thinking about the Soviet Union as informed analysis'.[40] Although Malenkov had called for reduced defence expenditure and increased production of consumer goods, by December 1954 he had lost his struggle for power against Khrushchev. Given the fact that Churchill followed his own policy of 'easement' with regards to East-West relations, it is unlikely that the Prime Minister gave Wilson's report much thought. The visit did, as Richard Crossman (a left-wing Labour MP) observed, provide another opportunity for Wilson to promote himself as an expert on Soviet affairs.[41]

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[40] Conversation between Molotov & Wilson, 21.5.53; & Wilson to Churchill, 6.6.53, NS1631/11 & 12, **FO371/106579**(PRO). J. Campbell, *Nye Bevan*, (London; Hodder & Stoughton 1992), pp.283-284.
[41] Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.335-336. J. Morgan (ed.), *The Backbench Diaries of Richard Crossman*, (London; Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan Cape 1981), 22.6.53, pp.249-256.

Referring to the Labour right, Wilson spoke of 'running a Bolshevik revolution with a Tsarist shadow Cabinet', but it is important to note that by 1964 the party leadership had achieved consensus on foreign policy, in particular on East-West relations. When Wilson spoke of the opportunities for *détente* with the USSR, and of the dangers inherent in proposals to create a multi-lateral nuclear force in NATO, he was expressing beliefs held by Brown, Gordon-Walker, Healey and the Labour right in general. Prior to the 1964 election, the party had united behind a pro-disarmament agenda, with an ambiguous pledge to renounce the British independent deterrent in order to forestall any pressure from the FRG for possession of its own nuclear weapons.[42] The Labour manifesto proclaimed the party's intention to 'put forward constructive proposals for integrating all NATO's nuclear weapons under political control' in order to ensure that all alliance members had 'a proper share in their deployment and control', and no incentive to develop their own national forces.[43] In addition, while Wilson praised Khrushchev for his commitment to *détente* and for signing the LTBT, he also publicly attacked the 'totalitarian Communism of China', describing Beijing's ideological militancy as a threat to world peace.[44]

Much to the disgust of the Labour left, Wilson also renounced his earlier anti-Americanism (reflected in particular by *In Place of Dollars*), stressing the

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[42] *Crossman Backbench Diaries*, 12.3.63, p.987. Patrick Gordon-Walker, 'The Labor Party's Defense and Foreign Policy', in *Foreign Affairs*, 42, 3 (1964), pp.390-398. Notes on discussions with Khrushchev, Gromyko & Gomulka, June 1963, Gordon-Walker Papers (**GNWR1/15**), Churchill College.
[43] I. Dale (ed.), *Labour Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997*, (Routledge 2000), pp.123-124.
[44] Speech at Bridgeport University, Connecticut, 3.3.64, in *The New Britain: Labour's Plan. Outlined by Harold Wilson*, (Penguin 1964), pp.90-100.

importance of the Anglo-American alliance for British foreign policy. His visits to Washington in March 1963 and the following year were, as Rusk informed Johnson, partly intended to 'reassure you regarding his *reliability* as an ally'. Henry Kissinger later noted that even by 1969 'some in the outgoing administration had considered [Wilson] too close to the left wing of the Labour Party; this and his vanity were supposed to make him unusually susceptible to Soviet blandishments'.[45] The Labour leader's efforts to prove his reliability to Washington did not prevent him from paying two visits to Moscow (June 1963 and June 1964). The purpose of these trips was to present Wilson as a competent statesman, and also to establish the basis of a future relationship with Khrushchev.

The first visit took place prior to the conclusion of the LTBT, the main event being the meeting between Wilson, Khrushchev, Gordon-Walker and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, on 10th June 1963. These talks were dominated by Khrushchev, who alternated between crude jokes and blustering threats. Wilson and Gordon-Walker attempted to impress the Soviet leader with Labour's proposal to renounce the UK's nuclear status in the interests of non-proliferation. Khrushchev boasted that the USSR did not 'take the French or the UK [nuclear] capability seriously', and he bragged about the ease with which Britain and France's nuclear forces would be destroyed in any global war. When the discussion turned to Germany, the atmosphere became unpleasant. Khrushchev suggested that he could reopen the issue of access to Berlin, and when Wilson

[45] N. D. Lankford, *The Last American Aristocrat. The biography of David K. E. Bruce*, (Boston; Little, Brown 1996), p.329. Rusk to Johnson, 28.2.64, **MF410**, emphasis as in original. H. Kissinger, *White House Years*, (London; Phoenix Press edition 2000), p.91.

warned that the result would be another crisis the Soviet leader made threatening comments about what would happen to Britain in the event of war. The conversation subsequently shifted to Laos, and Khrushchev appeared to calm down. Wilson's first effort to discuss diplomacy with the Soviet leader had not been a success - he had hardly distinguished himself by sycophantically comparing Khrushchev with Lenin, and by asserting that '[we] have no respect either for Adenauer or for Ulbricht'. The Soviet leader had, for his part, succeeded in browbeating the Labour leader over Berlin, although his threat to provoke another crisis was evidently another example of his tendency to intimidate Western visitors with empty bluster. The visitors' attempts to persuade Khrushchev to conclude a Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) with the USA and UK met with the uncompromising response that the USSR would not accept any independent verification measures, which would be used as a cover for espionage.[46]

Wilson and Gordon-Walker's visit in June 1964 took place with less embarrassment, and the Soviets treated the former with greater respect, as befitting a potential Prime Minister. The Labour leader took with him a 'master plan' for disarmament, involving a halt to the production of nuclear delivery vehicles, a 'bonfire' of obsolete bombers, a non-proliferation treaty, an agreement to 'freeze' the deployment of nuclear weapons in Central Europe, and the convening of annual tripartite summits at the United Nations. Foreign Office officials observed that the 'master plan' simply amalgamated existing US and Soviet proposals on

[46] Conversation between Gordon-Walker, A. Gromyko, Khrushchev & Wilson at Kremlin, 10.6.63; Moscow to FO, No.1211, 15.6.63, **PREM11/4894**(PRO) & **GNWR1/15**.

disarmament, and did not take into account the existing balance of forces or the problems of verification. As expected, the Soviets rejected the first and second proposals, which the Johnson administration had initially raised in early 1964. Khrushchev expressed a vague interest in the annual summit proposal, but given the fact that Labour was still in opposition, the main purpose of the visit was symbolic. One noteworthy feature of both visits was Wilson's comments on the need for frequent contacts between the Soviet and British governments. Wilson told Khrushchev in June 1963 that it was 'harder for a British Prime Minister to decide to come to Moscow than to go to the moon', and he commented that if Labour won the next election he 'would want to come [to the USSR] more often'. The following year, the Labour leader stated that a 'man-to-man approach' was needed to improve Anglo-Soviet relations. Given this emphasis on personal diplomacy it is therefore ironic that at the same time Wilson became Prime Minister Khrushchev was overthrown by his *Politburo* colleagues.[47] The impact of this development on the new British government's approach to East-West relations is examined in the next chapter.

[47] Moscow to FO, No.1061, 3.6.64; Moscow to FO, No.1070-1073, 4.6.64; & N. Henderson (FO) to J. O. Wright (No.10), 10.6.64, **PREM11/4894**(PRO). Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.307-308. Meeting in Kremlin on 10.6.63, **GNWR1/15**.

CHAPTER 3: ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS AND THE 'STAGNATION' OF *DÉTENTE*, OCTOBER 1964-FEBRUARY 1966.

Labour won the 1964 general election with an absolute majority of only three seats in parliament and, as Wilson subsequently observed, the new government had to address several issues with serious implications for Britain's economic and foreign policies:

> The Chinese had, the previous day, exploded their first nuclear weapon ... There was a telegram appraising the situation in the Soviet Union following the overthrow, less than twenty-four hours earlier, of Mr Khrushchev and the appointment of Mr Kosygin ... There was anxious news of the 'confrontation', the war between Indonesia and Malaysia, ... [and], grimmest of all, there was the economic news.[1]

The Wilson government inherited a balance of payments deficit of £800 million which, in addition to declining confidence in the value of sterling, initiated a long drawn-out struggle to prevent devaluation.[2] These economic problems not only absorbed much of the new government's time but also affected the UK's ability to contribute to NATO defence while fulfilling its military commitments 'East of Suez'. Wilson and his Ministers also had to face foreign policy problems - notably those concerning Indonesia's 'confrontation' with Malaysia, and the white separatist rebellion in Rhodesia - which were peripheral to East-West relations but which

[1] Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-1970*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1971), pp.2-3.
[2] The sterling problem, and its impact on Anglo-American relations, is analysed in R. Roy, *The Battle of the Pound: The Political Economy of Anglo-American Relations 1964-1968*, (PhD thesis, LSE 2001).

competed for time and attention with policy problems more relevant to the Cold War.[3]

After assuming office, the Wilson government had to address the implications of Khrushchev's downfall (15 October 1964) and the first Chinese nuclear test (16 October). The Labour government proclaimed its intention of developing *détente* in the Queen's speech to Parliament (3 November 1964) and also committed itself to pursue negotiations towards a nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT).[4] During the following year, Wilson sought a meeting with Khrushchev's successors, while British efforts to develop relations with the Eastern bloc focused on improving trading contacts. This chapter examines British policy towards East-West relations during the first sixteen months of Labour's term in office, with particular reference to the problems arising from Vietnam, NATO nuclear-sharing and non-proliferation, and will conclude by analysing Wilson's first visit to Moscow (February 1966).

China's nuclear test and Khrushchev's downfall: October 1964-January 1965.

Wilson's predecessor, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, was informed that a Chinese nuclear test appeared imminent when the Director of the CIA, John McCone, visited London in September 1964. McCone asserted that although the PRC's emergence

[3] Interview with Oliver Wright, p.12, **DOHP**. Easter, *British Defence Policy*, pp.257-259.
[4] 701 H.C.Deb.5s, (HMSO 1964), cols.34-37.

as a nuclear power would have a profound psychological effect on Asian states, Chinese military power would not be significantly enhanced. Both American and British assessments concluded that Beijing was unlikely to develop a short-range delivery capability before 1968, or to acquire long-range missile systems before 1975.[5] In fact, the Chinese did develop MRBMs by the mid-1960s, but the deployment of China's first ICBMs was delayed until 1980, by which time the USSR had become Beijing's main adversary.[6]

From Washington and London's point of view, the Chinese nuclear test threatened to inspire other states, notably India, to develop nuclear weapons. During his visit to London (December 1964) the Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, told Wilson that he was under political pressure to respond in kind to the Chinese test, and he requested an Anglo-American guarantee to protect non-nuclear states against nuclear blackmail.[7] British officials were concerned that if India became a nuclear power, the result would be widespread nuclear proliferation, which would increase the likelihood of local conflicts leading to global war. London was also concerned that the Britain's East of Suez commitments would be threatened by nuclear-capable enemies.[8] Yet despite Shastri's request the non-aligned Indians later expressed their preference for a US-Soviet guarantee rather than an all-Western commitment. However, Moscow was not prepared to exacerbate

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[5] Conversation between J. McCone & Douglas-Home at 10 Downing St, 21.9.64, **PREM11/5147**(PRO). CC(64)2nd Cabinet conclusions, 24.10.64, **CAB128/39**(PRO).
[6] J. Lewis & Hua Di, 'China's Ballistic Missile Programs. Technologies, Strategies, Goals', in *International Security* 17/2 (1992), pp.9-10, pp.16-19.
[7] Conversation between H. Alphand (French Ambassador to Washington) & Rusk, 21.5.65, **MF404**. DO(64)25, 25.3.64, **CAB148/2**(PRO). Conversation between Shastri & PM at 10 Downing St, 4.12.64, **PREM13/973**(PRO).
[8] C. Minogue (CRO) to J. O. Wright (No.10), 8.1.65, **PREM13/973**(PRO).

the Sino-Soviet split by openly aligning with India in concert with the Western powers. In late March 1965, the OPD was advised by OPD(O) (its official counterpart) that 'the West should not contemplate giving specific assurances to India unless we were firmly convinced that the only alternative would be an Indian nuclear programme'. For both Washington and London, this dilemma demonstrated the importance of a successful non-proliferation agreement, and it also contributed to the Labour government's decision to reverse its ambiguous pre-election pledge to abolish the 'independent' deterrent.[9]

Unlike the Chinese nuclear test, Khrushchev's downfall was unexpected. On the evening of 14 October 1964, the Soviet leader was summoned to a plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, during which he was arraigned by Suslov for his mismanagement of the economy and his high-handed treatment of the East Europeans and the Chinese. The Soviet leader was also condemned for the recklessness he had shown over Cuba in 1962. Following Suslov's denunciation of Khrushchev's record - 'Not leadership but a complete merry-go-round !' - the Central Committee voted for the latter's dismissal, a decision which was met with apathy by the Soviet populace.[10] *Tass* surprised Western governments with its sudden announcement that Khrushchev had been 'relieved of his duties ... in view of his advanced age and of the deterioration of his health'. British officials were aware of the failure of Khrushchev's economic policies, but concluded in March

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[9] OPD(65)19th meeting, 31.3.65, OPD(65), **CAB148/18**. Meeting & report by Committee on Nuclear Proliferation, 7.1.65 & 8.1.65, *FRUS XI. Arms Control and Disarmament*, pp.154-168. Stewart to PM, 3.3.65, **PREM13/973**(PRO).

[10] Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.376-378. D. Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1963-1965*, CWIHP Paper No.32 (2001), pp.10-13. Fursenko & Naftali, *'Hell of a Gamble'*, pp.353-354.

1964 that '[barring] his sudden illness or incapacitation, there is no reason to expect any major changes in the Soviet leadership'.[11] Following Khrushchev's overthrow, Leonid Brezhnev became CPSU secretary and Alexei Kosygin was appointed Premier, but there was also a younger generation of *Politburo* members - among them Alexander Shelepin (a former chairman of the KGB) and Dmitrii Polyanskii (who was appointed Deputy Premier) - who had increased their influence as a result of the *coup*. As noted above, both Brezhnev and Kosygin had been identified in Whitehall as possible successors, but the JIC conceded that 'Khrushchev's demise had occurred without warning'. Although there were 'indicators that he might be having trouble' with his *Politburo* colleagues, 'the difficulty was to know when the Russian leader ceased to control events'.[12] Khrushchev himself was oblivious to the threat to his position until the moment he was overthrown and cast into obscurity.

Trevelyan reported that the Kremlin *coup* was caused by Khrushchev's 'methods and personal idiosyncrasies', the failure of his economic policies and his mishandling of the Sino-Soviet split. The ambassador's assessment, noted by Wilson, was that Brezhnev and Kosygin would concentrate on domestic problems and relations with Mao, and although still concerned with European issues Moscow would neither undertake, nor respond to, any diplomatic initiatives.[13] Trevelyan's superiors agreed with his conclusions that present Soviet policy on *détente*,

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[11] Moscow to FO, 15.10.64, N.2170, NS1015/40, **FO371/177664**(PRO). *Trends and Implications of Soviet Policy April-November 1964*, 4.3.64, NS1022/19, **FO371/177670**(PRO).
[12] JIC(64)51st meeting, 15.10.64, **CAB159/42**(PRO). Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p.379, p.390. Hosking, *Soviet Union*, p.367.
[13] Moscow to FO, 20.10.64, N.2215; Wright to T. Bridges (FO), 21.10.64, **FO371/177670**(PRO).

relations with China and on developments in Eastern Europe were unlikely to change. Khrushchev's fall would not lead to reconciliation between Moscow and Beijing because Sino-Soviet differences were beyond repair, and the Foreign Office considered it 'unlikely that the Russians can force the East Europeans back into greater subservience to the Soviet Union'. NATO views of the succession and its implications were expressed in similar terms, the American view being that Khrushchev's successors would at least be less reckless in conducting foreign policy. As for the future of the new leadership, the US ambassador to Moscow, Foy Kohler, perceptively commented that Brezhnev was 'vain and ambitious, and ... may well be tempted to follow Khrushchev's example by combining [the] top party and government roles'.[14]

The Soviet ambassador, Alexei Soldatov, assured Wilson on 18 October that the new leadership would continue to follow Khrushchev's policy on 'peaceful coexistence', and would 'continue ... to develop co-operation with Her Majesty's Government in the fields of commercial, scientific and cultural exchanges'.[15] Trevelyan, however, expressed reservations as to the extent to which Anglo-Soviet contacts would develop, writing his assessments for the new Foreign Secretary (and for Wilson) in early November. Trevelyan examined the USSR's foreign policy since 1945, observing that while Stalin had envisaged the possibility that one day the USSR would be strong enough to win a world war against the

[14] FO brief for WEU meeting, 16-17.11.64, NS1015/47, **FO371/177667**(PRO). Papers from NATO Working Group on Soviet Policy, 25.11.64, NS1022/75, **FO371/177672**(PRO). Moscow to State Dept, No.1333, 28.10.64, **NSF**, USSR Country File (USSRCF) 219, LBJLIB.
[15] FO to Moscow, No.3822, 18.10.64, NS1015/65, **FO371/177665**.

capitalists, the development of thermonuclear weapons led his successors to develop the ideology of so-called 'peaceful co-existence'. At the 22nd CPSU Congress Khrushchev distinguished between his opposition to an East-West 'war of extermination', and Moscow's support for 'wars of national liberation' in the post-colonial world. Over the course of his tenure of power, Khrushchev discovered that increased military expenditure did not lead to enhanced security, but was instead crippling the Soviet economy. The USSR recognised that its interests lay in *détente* with the USA and its allies, but this would involve greater commercial and cultural contact between Eastern and Western Europe - which could undermine the Eastern bloc regimes - while *détente* would also anger the more militant Chinese. Khrushchev's dilemma was that he wanted to improve East-West relations but was unwilling to remould the USSR's political strategy to achieve this aim. Trevelyan concluded that there was little evidence to suggest that Brezhnev and Kosygin would succeed in resolving the dilemma their predecessor had failed to resolve.[16]

The conference of Ministers, senior civil servants and service chiefs at Chequers (21-22 November) provided an opportunity to assess the military aspect of the Soviet 'threat' and the prospects for reducing the British commitment to NATO.[17] In opposition, Labour politicians had argued the case for mutual reductions of NATO and WTO forces in Central Europe - one of the most

[16] Trevelyan to Gordon-Walker, 2.11.64 (two parts), NS1022/69 & NS1022/70, **FO371/177671**(PRO). Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, pp.335-345.
[17] S. Dockrill examines the Chequers conference in the context of contemporary British defence policy in 'Britain's Power and Influence: Dealing with Three Roles and the Wilson Government's Defence Debate at Chequers in November 1964', in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 11/1 (2000), pp.211-240.

prominent exponents of disengagement being the new Defence Secretary, Denis Healey. The majority of Ministers considered the retention of Britain's military commitments East of Suez to be a high priority. These commitments included not only the defence of former colonial territories (such as Malaysia) but membership of CENTO and SEATO. Although the Conservatives had followed a similar agenda while in office, the increasing burden of defence led to the establishment of the OPD(O)'s Long-Term Study Group on defence expenditure in May 1964. The study group's conclusions were debated at Chequers six months later, when the costs of defence budget were highlighted by the pound's weakness. Under pressure from Brown and Callaghan, the Labour government planned to cut military expenditure from £2,400 to £2,000 million by the end of the decade.[18] The problem was to determine where reductions could be made.

The Long-Term Study Group's report repeated the official consensus that the USSR would 'avoid war as a deliberate act of policy' and would seek to ease tensions with the Western powers. The Soviets would not, however, willingly relax their authority over Eastern Europe in the foreseeable future. Due to the reduced tensions in Europe there were militarily sound reasons for reducing BAOR, which was nominally 55,000 strong but was actually under-strength by 3,000 men. WEU arrangements enabled Britain to temporarily withdrawal troops from NATO whenever any crises erupted East of Suez. However, the study group warned that a permanent unilateral reduction of BAOR would encourage US troop

[18] Healey, *Time of My Life*, pp.178-180. Patrick Gordon-Walker, *The Cabinet*, (London; Heinemann 1972), p.136. Easter, *British Defence Policy*, p.183. MISC17/1st meeting, 21.11.64, **CAB130/213**(PRO).

reductions and thus weaken NATO solidarity, and would lead Washington to develop closer ties with Bonn at the expense of the Anglo-American alliance. The study group's report also argued that if Britain reneged on the London agreement of 1954, Bonn would have a pretext to renounce its pledge not to develop weapons of mass destruction. Wilson himself was suspicious of West German intentions. At Chequers he argued that considering the assessment that 'there was no longer a risk of war with the Soviet Union so long as NATO solidarity lasted', Alliance force levels were unrealistically high. Yet the reduction of BAOR 'will not only lessen our own political influence in Europe but would in present circumstances lead to a predominating German influence on European defence'. The Prime Minister argued that if the *Bundeswehr*'s growing military power was not counter-balanced, then Bonn's interest in reunification could lead the West Germans to dominate NATO politically and distort the Alliance's defensive agenda.[19] The Chequers meeting ended with agreement that reductions in defence expenditure could not be met by cutting BAOR, but Ministers privately hoped that British forces in the FRG could be reduced in future, either through a review of NATO strategy, an agreement on mutual force reductions with the USSR, or by unilateral means.[20]

The Chequers meeting also addressed the fate of *Polaris*, the purchase of which Macmillan had negotiated with Kennedy at the Nassau summit (December 1962). On 11 November Wilson, Gordon-Walker and Healey agreed to retain

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[19] OPD(O)(64)6; *Regional Study on Europe*, 23.10.64, **CAB148/40**(PRO).
[20] MISC17/4th meeting, 22.11.64, **CAB130/213**(PRO). OPD(65)12th meeting, 3.3.65, **CAB148/48**(PRO). Duffield, *Power Rules*, p.174.

Polaris, a decision which was endorsed at Chequers the following week. The Conservatives had intended to build five submarines armed with *Polaris* missiles, but in January 1965 the OPD decided that Britain could only afford a fleet of four.[21] The decision to keep *Polaris* was partly due to Wilson's concern that the Conservatives could exploit popular support for Britain's nuclear status and overturn Labour's narrow majority. It appears that even before the election Wilson was, despite Labour's manifesto promise, thinking of maintaining the deterrent.[22] The *Polaris* submarines were also regarded by the Foreign Office, MoD and COS as a counter against any new nuclear threats East of Suez, as well as any future return to isolationism on the part of the USA.[23] In strategic terms, the UK's *Polaris* fleet was not only overshadowed by the superpower nuclear arsenals, but it was questionable as to whether it would help defend Britain's worldwide commitments. The OPD was informed by OPD(O) in March 1965 that the *Polaris* fleet could be based in the NATO area or East of Suez, but could not be deployed simultaneously against both the USSR and China.[24] *Polaris* was retained principally for political reasons, although the Labour government's decision was presented as part of an initiative to replace the proposed NATO Multilateral Force (MLF).

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[21] MISC11/16, conversation between Gordon-Walker, Healey & PM at No.10 Downing St, 11.11.64, **CAB130/212**(PRO). MISC17/2nd meeting, 21.11.64, **CAB130/213**(PRO). OPD(65)5th meeting, 29.1.65, **CAB148/18**(PRO).

[22] Ball, 2.12.64, *FRUS XIII*, p.126-132. Hennessy, *Secret State*, pp.70-77.

[23] COS278/64(Annex); *The British Strategic Nuclear Capability*, 14.10.64, **DEFE5/154**(PRO). Conversation between Healey & Dutch Defence Minister at MoD, 14.12.64, **PREM13/27**(PRO). Hennessy, *Muddling Through*, pp.114-117.

[24] OPD(65)5th & 19th meetings, 29.1.65 & 31.3.65, **CAB148/18**(PRO).

The MLF concept was developed in 1960-1961 by State Department officials to satisfy the FRG's demands for a role in NATO nuclear strategy. American officials were as concerned as their British counterparts over Germany's future, and the MLF was partly intended to forestall Bonn pressing for nuclear weapons, either independently or in collaboration with France.[25] Macmillan and Kennedy had both agreed to 'the development of a multilateral NATO nuclear force' at Nassau, but the idea of a mixed-manned *Polaris* surface fleet was unpopular in Whitehall, not only because of its implications for the UK's nuclear status, but also because West German participation in the MLF was bound to arouse Moscow's wrath. Wilson showed some sympathy for the Soviet point of view, which in his opinion combined respect for the FRG's post-war economic revival with the fear that the USSR might again be the victim of German aggression.[26] The Prime Minister therefore seized on the concept of an 'Atlantic Nuclear Force' (ANF), devised by Cabinet Office officials, as an alternative. The ANF would consist of the British V bomber force (replaced by the *Polaris* submarines once they entered service), an American contingent of equal strength and a mixed-manned element, with the French *force de frappe* being added should de Gaulle agree to participate. In addition, participants would sign a treaty blocking the dissemination of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states.[27]

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[25] Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG*, pp.41-43. Gavin, 'Flexible Response', p.857.
[26] COS(65)55th meeting, 10.9.64, **DEFE4/171**(PRO). Conversation between PM & G. Schröder (West German Foreign Minister) at No.10, 11.12.64, **PREM13/27**(PRO).
[27] MISC11/12, Defence Study Group Report, 9.11.64, **CAB130/211**(PRO). S. Schrafstetter & S. Twigge, 'Trick or Truth ? The British ANF Proposal, West Germany and Nonproliferation', in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 11/2 (2000), pp.167-169.

Wilson argued that the ANF option reinforced interdependence within NATO, thus obscuring his abrupt U-turn on *Polaris*. National pride would be appeased by the fact that British nuclear forces would return to national control in the event of the Alliance collapsing. The ANF was also considered by Ministers to be less harmful to *détente* - and less provocative to the Soviets - because of the dilution of the mixed-manned element, and the fact that the ANF consisted of existing weapons systems. However, officials approached the issue more in the context of inter-allied relations, and did not believe that the ANF would be more acceptable to Moscow than the MLF.[28] The West German Chancellor, Ludwig Erhard, welcomed the ANF, and when Wilson, Gordon-Walker and Healey visited Washington (7-8 December) they discovered that with the exception of George Ball, the MLF had few supporters in the Johnson administration. The President himself was indecisive on the nuclear-sharing issue, and the Washington visit concluded with the Americans promising to 'consider' the ANF, and to give time to the British to consult other NATO governments on their proposals. The MLF had, as Healey later put it, been 'torpedoed', but as officials had predicted the Soviets were as hostile towards the ANF as they had been towards the MLF, declaring that NATO plans for nuclear-sharing involved proliferation.[29]

One of the Labour government's expressed objectives was to play a part in negotiations for an NPT, but Foreign Office officials advised Wilson that in the

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[28] MISC17/4th meeting, 22.11.64, **CAB130/213**(PRO). MISC11/2(Final), *Atlantic Nuclear Force*, 9.11.64, **CAB130/211**(PRO).
[29] MISC17/6, Bonn to FO, No.1167, 18.11.64, **CAB130/213**(PRO). Memoranda on US-UK talks, 7-8.12.64, **PREM13/104**(PRO). Conversations at White House on MLF, 6.12.64 & 8.12.64, **NSF**, UKCF214, LBJLIB. Healey, *Time of My Life*, p.305. Schrafstetter & Twigge, 'ANF Proposal', p.174.

short-term the Soviet leadership was unprepared to undertake any major diplomatic initiatives, and would 'go slow' on East-West relations for the time being.[30] Nevertheless, the Prime Minister intended to invite Kosygin to London for the spring of 1965, and Trevelyan was instructed to offer this invitation to the Soviet Foreign Ministry on 9 December. Diplomatic protocol dictated that, following Macmillan's visit to the USSR it was the British government's turn to welcome the Soviet Premier. However, Trevelyan informed London on the 12th that the Soviets insisted that Wilson visit Moscow first. Although both governments agreed that Gromyko would visit the UK in March 1965, there was deadlock over the exchange of visits by the respective Premiers.[31] The ambassador to Moscow advised against the Prime Minister visiting the USSR first, because the Soviets would benefit from the propaganda image of Wilson hurrying to talk to Brezhnev and Kosygin on their home ground, while the latter would be able to grill Wilson on NATO nuclear-sharing before any agreement had been reached within the Alliance. Denis Greenhill, the undersecretary supervising the Northern Department, expressed the view that the Prime Minister could not travel to Moscow 'until there are matters of substance to discuss'. Wilson, however, stated that he was 'not concerned to stand on protocol and would make the first move if necessary', and he suggested that Kosygin was unwilling to leave Moscow until his position in the Kremlin had become more secure.[32]

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[30] UK Delegation to NATO (UKDelNATO) to FO, No.9(Saving), 11.2.65, N1051/4, **FO371/182498**(PRO). OPD(O)(64)16, Briefs for PM's visit to Washington, 24.11.64, **CAB148/40**(PRO).
[31] FO to Moscow, No.4042, 9.12.64; & Moscow to FO, No.2612, 12.12.64, **PREM13/598**(PRO).
[32] Trevelyan to FO, 13.12.64; & Conversation between Averell Harriman & PM at No.10, 7.1.65, **PREM13/598**(PRO). Note by H. Smith (ND), NS1051/3, **FO371/182761**(PRO).

By January 1965, Wilson had overcome the Foreign Office argument that the Soviet Premier would have to visit Britain first. According to Bruce, the Prime Minister presumed that while Kosygin would feel 'inhibited' in London, in Moscow he 'would have access to his colleagues, would feel more secure and would, hopefully, be more forthcoming' with his visitor. The communiqué announcing the exchange of visits deliberately did not specify which country would play host first.[33] Yet despite Wilson's readiness to meet the Soviet leadership on their terms, his planned visit was delayed for a further year. This was attributed partly to Soviet opposition to the ANF, which Kosygin expressed in an angry letter to the Prime Minister on 7 January. Kosygin accused Wilson of appeasing West German nuclear ambitions, and stated that plans for nuclear-sharing within NATO would rule out Soviet agreement on an NPT. Trevelyan gloomily noted at the end of the month that '[sooner] or later this year we and the Russians may be faced with the question of how to avoid increases of tensions which neither side wants, but which follow from the development of existing situations'.[34] The ambassador's prediction was confirmed in early February, when the dispute over non-proliferation was compounded by the USA's overt military intervention in the Vietnam war.

[33] London to State Dept, No.79, 16.7.65, **MF408**. Note by J. Wright (No.10), 11.1.65, NS1051/6, **FO371/182761**(PRO).
[34] Kosygin to PM, 7.1.65, **PREM13/279**(PRO). Trevelyan to Smith, 6.1.65, NS1051/3, **FO371/182761**(PRO).

The Vietnam war, East-West relations and Wilson's attempts at diplomatic mediation: December 1964-January 1966.

The Kennedy administration had provided substantial military aid to bolster the South Vietnamese regime against the Communist-led National Liberation Front (NLF), but it was during Johnson's term in office that the USA became actively involved in the conflict in Vietnam. Washington claimed that responsibility for the war lay with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), which was sending North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops to infiltrate South Vietnam in support of the NLF. The North Vietnamese, for their part, believed that they had been tricked into accepting partition in the 1954 Geneva conference, and were determined to reunify Vietnam by force. The process by which the USA became drawn into the Vietnam war in late 1964 and early 1965 has been discussed in detail elsewhere,[35] and the following section concentrates on the implications of the conflict for East-West relations and, in particular, for Britain's relationship with the USSR.

The Wilson government publicly supported for US policy in Vietnam in order to preserve the Anglo-American alliance. There was also an informal *quid pro quo* in which Britain supported American policy towards Vietnam in return

[35] The origins of American involvement have been most recently discussed in D. Kaiser's *American Tragedy. Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War*, (Cambridge Mass.; Harvard University Press 2000), and - more controversially - F. Logevall's *Choosing War. The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam*, (Berkeley Ca.; University of California Press 1999). See also R. D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War. The United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975*, (OUP 1997), pp.154-181. P. Busch analyses the UK's policy towards Vietnam during the Kennedy era in *Britain and Kennedy's War in Vietnam, 1961-1963*, (PhD thesis, LSE 2001).

for Washington's backing against Indonesia.[36] The American and British governments shared the common objective of preventing, in Michael Stewart's words, 'a complete breakthrough of Communist power from in central land mass of Europe and Asia into the rest of the world'. Stewart, who succeeded Gordon-Walker as Foreign Secretary after the latter lost the Leyton by-election (21 January 1965), publicly defended America's actions in Vietnam and was an exponent of the traditional policy of containment. He informed Cabinet colleagues in November 1965 that although the Soviet threat to the West had receded in recent years, Moscow had not renounced its goal of spreading world Communism. Stewart expressed his views on Western objectives in the Third World as a whole, and his comments also reflected the British government's attitude towards Vietnam:

> [The] task of the Western alliance [is] on the one hand to keep the direct tension between the Soviet Union and themselves as low as possible, while at the same time ensuring that no avoidable gap is created ... which will allow the further extension either of the military power or the political influence of Communism, whether deriving its authority from Moscow or Peking.[37]

Of the two major Communist powers, China was regarded by Britain as the less predictable and the more dangerous adversary in Asia. British perceptions of the Chinese threat placed less emphasis on the PRC's growing military power than on Mao Zedong's 'wars of national liberation' doctrine and Beijing's support for anti-Western insurgencies and political movements throughout the Third World.

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[36] Interview with Michael Palliser, p.12, **DOHP**. A. Parker, 'International Aspects of the Vietnam War', in P. Lowe (ed.), *The Vietnam War*, (Manchester University Press 1998), p.201. Conversation between Paul Hasluck (Australian Minister of External Affairs) & PM at House of Commons, 9.11.64, **PREM13/1945**(PRO).

[37] For Stewart's support of US policy, see his speech at Oxford University, 16.6.65, in the Stewart Papers (**STWT12/3/3**), Churchill College. OPD(65)174; *Defence Review. Some General Considerations of Foreign Policy with particular reflections on the Middle East*, 22.11.65, **CAB148/25**(PRO).

Although British officials favoured the eventual neutralisation of South East Asia, in the short-term it was deemed necessary for the USA and the Western powers to maintain a military presence in the Far East to prevent the region from 'falling under Chinese Communist domination'. American intervention in Vietnam was supported in principle by London on these grounds.[38]

Yet as was the case with previous crises, the British were also concerned that the Vietnam war could escalate into a major East-West confrontation. As Washington resorted to air attacks on the DRV, officials in Whitehall wondered whether their American counterparts had any firm objectives in Vietnam, let alone any idea of the means by which these could be achieved.[39] Wilson was worried that if the Americans were 'checkmated' in a limited war in Vietnam, they would choose to escalate the war despite the risks of Chinese or Soviet intervention.[40] An additional problem for the Prime Minister was that Johnson and his officials frequently pressed the UK to send troops to supplement the US war effort. The Labour government in no mood to adopt new commitments in the Far East while the 'confrontation' remained unresolved, and after Indonesia made peace with Malaysia (August 1966) the British intended to reduce, rather than increase, their military commitments in South-East Asia.[41] In direct contrast to Attlee, who sent British troops to fight in Korea in 1950, Wilson was unwilling to follow Australia and New Zealand's example by involving Britain in the war in Vietnam.

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[38] Interview with Stewart, 18.2.65,Hetherington Papers, **AHP8/3**. OPD(O)(65)63(Final); *Defence Review Studies. Indo-Pacific Strategy*, DOP(O)C secretariat, 20.10.65, **CAB148/44**(PRO).
[39] JIC(65)14th, 1.4.65, **CAB159/43**(PRO). 716 H.C.Deb5s (HMSO 1965), cols. 1123-1127.
[40] J. Young, 'The Wilson Government and the Davies peace mission to North Vietnam, July 1965', in *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998), pp.545-546, p.553. Castle, *Diaries*, 14.2.66, p.107.
[41] London to State Dept, SECUN14, 14.5.65, **MF407**. Wright, p.13, **DOHP**.

Wilson's knew that the Labour left resented his refusal to openly condemn American policy towards South-East Asia, and was aware that left-wing backbenchers would revolt against the government if the UK sent even a limited contingent to Vietnam.[42] Wilson's policy of offering diplomatic support for American intervention in Indochina while advocating a negotiated settlement to the war was due to his concerns over escalation, the need to pacify criticism from his party, and his reluctance to see Britain actively involved in Vietnam. The Prime Minister argued that the UK's role as co-chairman of the Geneva conference precluded participation in the war, and that Britain's role was to work with the other co-chairman, the USSR, to promote a peace settlement. The Geneva Accords did not grant the co-chairmen a long-term peace-making role, and the 1954 conference could not be reconvened without the consent of all the other participants - the USA, France, China, North and South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and the International Control Commission (ICC) states (Canada, India and Poland). Nonetheless, the British government adopted the position that 'the two co-chairmen can co-operate to ease tensions and restore peace and stability in Vietnam'.[43] The Geneva co-chairmanship provided the basis for Wilson's subsequent efforts to promote a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam conflict.

In early February 1965, the NLF attacked the American bases at Pleiku and Qui Nhon, providing the pretext for US air-strikes on North Vietnam. The Johnson

[42] Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness. Diaries 1963-67*, (Hutchinson 1987), 26.5.65, p.262. Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.392-399.
[43] SEAD memorandum, 4.12.64; & FO to Washington, No.1212, 17.2.65, **PREM13/692**(PRO).

administration's decision to bomb North Vietnamese targets South of the 19th parallel was made despite the fact that Kosygin was visiting Hanoi with a high-level Soviet delegation. American policy-makers presumed that the USSR's objectives were to gain greater influence over the DRV and to fulfil its pledge to support a fellow socialist state. Although the Soviets provided the North Vietnamese with anti-aircraft artillery, surface-to-air missiles, warplanes and advisors, Washington concluded that the USSR would not risk 'overt, military action' which would end in a confrontation with the USA.[44] Trevelyan likewise informed London that the Soviets were obliged 'to honour their obligation to give "necessary help" against American aggression', but did 'not want any extension of hostilities' in South-East Asia.[45]

British assessments of Soviet policy differed from American interpretations in one respect. US officials regarded the USSR as actively assisting North Vietnamese-inspired subversion in South Vietnam, and concluded that Khrushchev's successors considered ideological competition with China to be more important than *détente* with the West.[46] The British argued that Moscow's hand had been forced by the Chinese and that, as the *chargé* in Beijing commented, the Soviet objective was to 'recover control over events in Viet-Nam'. The USSR had to assist the DRV in order to counter accusations of 'capitulationism' from the PRC, but the Soviets were also determined to prevent the conflict from escalating. From

[44] NSC548th meeting, 10.2.65, II, 30, **NSF**, NSC Meetings 1, LBJLIB. Memorandum by McCone, 3.2.65, *FRUS II. Vietnam 1965*, (Washington 1996), pp.129-131.
[45] Trevelyan to Stewart, 22.2.65, NS103196/18, **FO371/182757**(PRO).
[46] Policy Planning Council paper, *Soviet Policy in the light of the Vietnam crisis*, 15.2.65, **NSF**, USSRCF220, LBJLIB. NIE11-65, *Soviet Politics after Khrushchev*, 1.7.65, **MFF15/403**.

the Moscow embassy, Brimelow suggested that the Soviets calculated that the Vietnamese Communists were independent from Beijing, and a unified Vietnam would therefore be another element in the 'political containment' of the PRC. Yet the escalation of the war 'threatens to kill a lot of Vietnamese and throw the rest into the arms of the Chinese', and Moscow's concerns over Vietnam were motivated by anti-Chinese as well as anti-American calculations.[47] While Foreign Office officials were convinced of the need for the de-escalation, if not a negotiated settlement, to the war, they were unsure of how the Vietnam conflict could be peacefully resolved and, as will be argued subsequently, were less optimistic than the Prime Minister as far as the prospects of mediation were concerned.

Ilya Gaiduk's study on Soviet policy towards Vietnam shows that the Foreign Office's interpretations cited above had some substance to them. Gaiduk states that the Soviet leadership calculated that the war in Indochina would sap American and Chinese strength, assisting Soviet policy goals in Europe and Asia. Moscow also hoped to supplant Beijing as Hanoi's principal ally. However, the Soviets did not want Vietnam to be the *casus belli* of a Third World War, and privately counselled the North Vietnamese to negotiate with the Americans. Yet the Chinese had greater influence in Hanoi until the end of the decade, partly because Beijing annually provided more aid than Moscow until 1967, but also because of the close ties between the Chinese and North Vietnamese leaderships.

[47] Beijing to FO, No.134, 5.2.65, NS103196/7, **FO371/182757**(PRO). Brimelow to A. de la Mare (SEAD), 18.2.66, N1021/81/2, **FO371/188487**(PRO).

Although the latter were by no means puppets of the PRC, Hanoi and Beijing had a shared hostility to peace talks which lasted until 1968.[48]

In December 1964 Wilson was informed by Washington that an air campaign against North Vietnam was imminent, and had stated that the British government would support air-strikes as long as these were geographically restricted so as not to provoke Chinese intervention. Following the first bombing raids in February 1965 the Prime Minister's concern that the war would escalate coexisted with annoyance at what he considered to be inadequate consultation on Washington's part. After a sharp telephone conversation with Johnson on the night of the 10-11 February, McGeorge Bundy sent a telegram to 10 Downing Street assuring Wilson that he would be informed in advance of any change in US strategy. Five days later, Bruce informed Wilson and Stewart that air-raids on North Vietnam would be restricted to targets South of the 19th parallel. Wilson was temporarily reassured that the USA would not provoke a clash with China, but he still wanted to prove to the Labour left that Britain was not merely 'the tail-end Charlie in an American bomber'.[49]

On 16 February, Trevelyan informed London that the Soviets proposed to send a joint message from the co-chairman concerning the US bombing of North Vietnam. In Washington two days later, Rusk informed the British ambassador,

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[48] I. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*, (Chicago; Ivan A. Dee 1996), p.18, pp.30-31, pp.57-61, pp.64-67. Qiang Zhai, 'Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1965', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 6/7 (1995-1996), pp.230-237.

[49] Telephone conversation between Johnson & PM, 10-11.2.65; M. Bundy to PM, 11.2.65; Conversation between Bruce, PM & Stewart at 10 Downing St, 16.2.65; & FO to Washington, No.2322, 23.3.65, **PREM13/692**(PRO).

Lord Harlech, that both co-chairman could solicit the views of the other Geneva states on the situation in Vietnam, in order to 'consider what further action [the co-chairman] might take'.[50] The British passed this proposal on to the Soviets on the 19th, and Trevelyan presumed that Moscow's insistence on secrecy while this message was considered was intended to avoid more Chinese polemics at the USSR's expense. The attempt to use the Geneva co-chairmanship to initiate peace talks stalled in mid-March, much to the frustration of Wilson and his Cabinet.[51] Stewart informed Lord Harlech that the Soviets were unlikely to respond to the British message, and that the initiative had been 'probably killed by the Chinese'. Moscow issued a statement on 15 March condemning the 'aggressive acts' of the USA, while Stewart and Gromyko bickered over Vietnam when the latter visited London the following day.[52] These exchanges ended the prospects of using the co-chairmanship to promote peace talks, although Wilson continually sought to persuade the Soviet leadership to assist his efforts at mediation.[53]

The Americans were unwilling to see the Geneva conference reconvened, believing that they would be outmanoeuvred by the Soviets, Chinese and the French at the conference table - the Johnson administration was particularly embittered by de Gaulle's public attacks on US intervention in Vietnam.[54] The

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[50] Moscow to FO, No.326, 16.2.65, **PREM13/692**(PRO). Conversation between Lord Harlech & Rusk at State Dept, 18.2.65, *FRUS II*, p.319.
[51] FO to Moscow, N.533, 19.2.65; FO to Washington, N.1378, 20.2.65, **PREM13/692**(PRO). CC14(65)14th conclusions, 4.3.65, **CAB128/39**(PRO).
[52] Moscow to FO, N.546, N.550 & N.551, 15.3.65, **PREM13/693**(PRO). Conversation between Gromyko and Stewart at No.10, 16.3.65, **PREM13/603**(PRO).
[53] R. B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War. III*, (Macmillan 1991), p.59.
[54] A. de la Mare to D. Allen (No.10), 27.4.67, **FCO15/666**(PRO). L. Nuti, *Transatlantic relations in the era of détente - or, the "other" end of the Cold War*, (Oslo; Nobel Institute Research Seminar Paper, 2002), p.7. I am grateful to Dr S. Dockrill for providing me with a copy of this paper.

Soviets responded to Wilson's subsequent peace-making gestures (such as the Commonwealth Mission in July 1965) by maintaining that they had no authorisation to negotiate on Hanoi's behalf, and that the only way to end the war was for the USA to unconditionally halt air-strikes against the DRV, and to accept the 'four points' outlined by the North Vietnamese premier, Pham Van Dong (8 April 1965). The 'four points' called for an American withdrawal from South Vietnam, the denunciation of the American-South Vietnamese military alliance, the adoption of the NLF's political programme in the South, and the peaceful reunification of Vietnam without foreign intervention.[55] These demands were unacceptable to the Johnson administration, as these effectively involved acceptance of NLF and North Vietnamese war aims.

In mid-April the British turned to the idea of convening a conference on Cambodian neutrality which could lead to 'back door' negotiations on Vietnam. The Soviets had proposed a Cambodian conference in April 1963, and the British were ready to consider this proposal two years later, despite Washington's obvious lack of enthusiasm. Cambodia had border disputes with Thailand and South Vietnam and its sovereign, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, was bound to demand international endorsement of Cambodia's borders by any conference. The Americans therefore insisted on prior consultations with the Thais and South Vietnamese before any announcement concerning a conference.[56] This response annoyed the normally pro-American Foreign Secretary, who complained that if

[55] Moscow to FO, No.1252, 23.6.65, **PREM13/690**(PRO). Smith, *Vietnam War III*, pp.82-83, 87-89.
[56] CC26(65)26th conclusions, 27.4.65, **CAB128/39**(PRO). Washington to FO, N.1916, 16.4.65, **PREM13/694**(PRO).

Bangkok and Saigon were allowed to veto the Cambodian initiative 'the tail would be wagging the dog'. The British were ready to work with the Soviets on a joint announcement on a Cambodian conference, despite US objections, when Sihanouk publicly sabotaged the initiative on 24 April. The Prince declared that Cambodia would not participate in any conference not strictly confined to the issue of its neutrality, thereby thwarting hopes that a conference could encourage discussions to break the deadlock over Vietnam.[57] The British ambassador to Phnom Penh reported that Sihanouk's intransigence was encouraged by Beijing, a judgement which Qiang Zhai has confirmed in a recent study. In retrospect the Cambodian initiative foundered not only because of Beijing's intervention, but because of the regional rivalries between Cambodia and its neighbours which subsequently had tragic consequences for Sihanouk's realm.[58]

Wilson's attempts at peace-making, like other third-party initiatives, were rendered irrelevant because of the course of events on the battlefield. In March 1965 the first American combat troops were dispatched to South Vietnam, following the landing of a force of US Marines at Danang. During the spring of 1965 the air campaign against the DRV (known as *Rolling Thunder*) intensified, while American troops were drawn into combat in the South. At the end of July Washington decided to raise troop levels from 75,000 to 125,000, beginning a progressive American military build-up to the point when, by 1968, there were

[57] FO to Washington, N.3156, 16.4.65; FO to Belgrade, N.247, 20.4.65; & Phnom Penh to FO, N.172 & N.175, 24.4.65, **PREM13/694**(PRO).
[58] Phnom Penh to FO, N.264-266, 15.5.65, N.499, 6.9.65, **PREM13/102**(PRO). Qiang Zhai, *Beijing and the Vietnamese Peace Talks, 1965-68. New Evidence from Chinese Sources*, CWHIP Working Paper No.18 (1997), pp.4-5. N. Fielding (Phnom Penh) to Brown, 23.9.66, **PREM13/750**(PRO).

500,000 US troops in South Vietnam.[59] On 31 May 1965 the Chinese Foreign Minister, Chen Yi, warned the British *chargé* that while China would not provoke a wider war over Vietnam, any American attack on the PRC would lead to a Sino-American war.[60] Mao's doctrine of supporting 'wars of national liberation' and the objective of undermining 'revisionist' Soviet influence in the Third World were two factors behind Beijing's Vietnam policy, but the Chinese also regarded the American military presence in South-East Asia as a direct threat to their security. Between 1965 and 1970 320,000 Chinese troops were deployed in North Vietnam, and Chen's comments to the British *chargé*, which were passed on to Washington, were accompanied by efforts to put China on a war footing.[61] The Americans concluded that because of Beijing's doctrine that 'the US can be confronted and defeated in South-East Asia by [indigenous] revolutionary tactics', China would not intervene unless the survival of the DRV was at stake.[62] The Johnson administration also judged that any damage done to *détente* by Vietnam would be manageable, and that while the Soviets would continue to avoid a role in negotiations, they also hoped to avoid any East-West clash over Indochina.[63] In London officials of the Foreign Office's South-East Asia Department (SEAD) concluded that although 'intensified fighting is unlikely to bring decisive advantage

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[59] SNIE10-5-65, *Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions*, 28.4.65, **MFF15-401**. D. Anderson, 'The United States and Vietnam', in Lowe (ed.), *Vietnam War*, p.107.
[60] Beijing to FO, N.722, 31.5.65, **PREM13/695**(PRO). Bundy to Johnson, 4.6.65, *FRUS XXX. China*, (Washington 1998), pp.173-174.
[61] Chen Jian, 'China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975', in Lowe (ed.), *Vietnam War*, pp.170-175. Qiang Zhai, 'Beijing and the Vietnam Conflict, 1964-1965: New Chinese Evidence', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 6/7, pp.38-43.
[62] NSC553rd meeting, 27.7.65, *FRUS III. Vietnam 1965*, (Washington 1996), pp.260-263. SNIE10-5-65, *Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions*, 28.4.65, **MFF15-401**.
[63] McNamara to Johnson, 30.7.65; & Rusk to Johnson, 30.9.65, *FRUS III*, pp.280-284, pp.427-428. State Dept to Paris, TOPOL A-1, *Soviet External Policy*, 2.7.65, **MF404**.

to either side', as the war in Vietnam intensified the belligerents would become progressively '*less* ready to negotiate than they are now'.[64]

The Foreign Office's South-East Asia experts had reached a conclusion that Wilson seemed unable, or unwilling, to accept - that the prospects for a diplomatic settlement were slim because both Hanoi and Washington were determined to continue fighting. Wilson was informed before his visit to Washington in December 1965 that while neither side could break the deadlock on the battlefield, there was 'no halfway house' between American and North Vietnamese war aims and a compromise settlement, though necessary, was impossible to achieve. SEAD officials presumed that due to the scale of the American military commitment the DRV and the NLF would eventually have to concede defeat. Like their American counterparts, British officials presumed that the Americans would finally prevail in Vietnam, but in the short-term Washington's determination to press for military victory would thwart third-party efforts at diplomatic mediation. Wilson was advised that Britain should uphold its support for the USA while preparing to promote negotiations at the right moment - the question was whether such on opportunity would actually arise.[65]

The Wilson government publicly adhered to the argument that the DRV was responsible both for the outbreak of hostilities, and for blocking efforts to hold peace talks. However in private the Cabinet was divided, like the party as a

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[64] SEAD memorandum, *The War in Vietnam*, 1.6.65, **PREM13/695**(PRO), emphasis as in original.
[65] OPD(O(65)78; *Briefs for Prime Minister's Visit to the United States - Vietnam*, 3.12.65, **CAB148/45**(PRO).

whole, between the left and right-wing, with the former advocating complete dissociation from American policy towards Vietnam.[66] Wilson's efforts at mediation were not only intended to appease the Labour left, but also to facilitate the conclusion of a conflict which threatened to escalate into a wider war. However, Hanoi consistently rejected third party initiatives throughout 1965, and was encouraged to do so by Beijing. Furthermore, contrary to Wilson's hopes, the Soviets consistently refused to involve themselves in the Prime Minister's efforts to play peace-maker. Wilson was in fact fully aware that 'the Soviet Union was in no position to break solidarity' with North Vietnam 'otherwise they (sic) would be accused of being capitalist stooges' by the Chinese.[67] Yet the main assumption behind Wilson's attempts at mediation - that Britain had some influence on American policy and could encourage the USA towards accepting negotiations - was false. As George Ball retrospectively noted, 'Wilson's reluctance to provide a wholehearted endorsement of Johnson's Vietnam adventures and his efforts at diplomatic intervention touched the President's most hypersensitive nerve'. The tensions behind the façade of Anglo-American unity were exposed when Kosygin visited London in February 1967, in circumstances which will be examined below.[68]

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[66] PM to Johnson, 26.1.66, **PREM13/1272**(PRO). CC5(65)5th conclusions, 3.2.66, **CAB128/41**(PRO).
[67] Conversation between Averell Harriman & PM at No.10, 24.3.65, **PREM13/693**(PRO). Moscow to FO, No.496, 23.2.66; & FO to Washington, No.2237, 28.2.66, **PREM13/1273**(PRO).
[68] George Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, (NY; W. W. Norton & Company 1982), p.336.

'Evolution' and East-West trade policy: December 1964-February 1966.

As noted previously, British governments saw nothing anomalous in maintaining commercial relations with politically hostile Communist states, and before the Labour election victory the Foreign Office had concluded that East-West trade was one of the few feasible means of encouraging the 'evolution' of Eastern Europe. Eden and Macmillan paid lip-service to improved commercial links with the Soviet bloc, while Wilson developed his interest in East-West trade during the 1950s. There were, however, certain factors which restricted Western commercial contacts with the Eastern bloc states. The first was the strategic embargo established in Paris by the members of COCOM in 1950. COCOM consisted of all the NATO powers (excluding Iceland) and Japan, and its role was to prevent the export of materials which would enhance Communist military capabilities. These materials were covered by three lists; Munitions, Atomic Energy and the 'International' ('I') list, which covered raw materials and manufactured goods which had potential strategic applications. Following the Korean war, COCOM maintained a stricter embargo on China than on the Soviet bloc states until the UK unilaterally renounced the 'China differential' in 1957. The British argued that the Chinese could gain access to embargoed goods through trade with its Soviet bloc allies, hence the imposition of a harsher embargo against the former made no sense. The following year, COCOM abolished the 'China differential' and adopted uniform restrictions for Western trade with the 'Sino-Soviet bloc'. It was ironic that a decade later Britain proposed to reintroduce the China differential on the

grounds that the 'Sino-Soviet bloc' was irreparably split by the feud between Moscow and Beijing.[69] Within COCOM, the Americans often proposed additions to the three lists, while the British, French and other European member states argued for reductions. The 'I' list was the main source of contention, because items such as machine tools and computers had military as well as civilian applications.[70]

A second factor concerned the effect of British trade with Communist powers on Anglo-American relations. Provided that COCOM's rules were upheld, the Johnson administration considered trade with Eastern Europe to be a positive means of promoting 'bridge-building', but Washington opposed Britain's readiness to offer long-term credit agreements to bloc countries. This problem arose in late 1963 when the British decided to extend £100 million in credit to the USSR for a fertilizer plant, and by January 1965 the UK had concluded three long-term credit agreements with the Soviets, and one each with Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The Americans based their objections on the prospect of a 'credit race' between Western powers which the USSR could exploit to strengthen its industrial base, and Washington was annoyed that the British blocked agreement within NATO to limit Western credit.[71] This issue highlighted a contradiction in American policy on trade. It was in the interests of 'bridge-building' to draw East European states closer to the West by developing trading links, but not necessarily to help the Soviet bloc overcome the failures of central planning, particularly because

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[69] ESC(65)8, Memorandum for Ministerial Committee on Strategic Exports, 3.3.65, **CAB134/1906**(PRO). OPD(68)19, *International Strategic Embargo*, A. Crosland, 19.3.68, **CAB148/36**(PRO).
[70] NATO to State Dept, 6.1.65, *FRUS IX*, pp.476-479.
[71] M. Bundy to Johnson, 14.4.64, *FRUS IX*, pp.452-453. H. Smith, *Conference of Commercial Officers for Eastern Europe*, 12.1.65, , N1151/3, **FO371/182513**(PRO). State Dept to Missions, No.9634, 5.1.64, **NSF**, UKCF206, LBJLIB.

Communist methods still had some appeal as a means of promoting economic development in the Third World. In addition, while the USA tolerated 'non-strategic' trade with the USSR and East European states, Britain's readiness to do business with Cuba and China was far less welcome. Anglo-Cuban trade was the subject of a major row between Johnson and Douglas-Home in the spring of 1964, following the Conservative government's decision to approve the export of buses to Havana.[72] Its Labour successor likewise had to contend with American hostility towards trade with the PRC, which influenced subsequent British efforts to reintroduce the 'China differential'.

The final factor determining East-West trade relations involved the centralised planning imposed by the Communist regimes on their national economies. Following the upheavals of 1956 the East European states took tentative steps to reform their decrepit economies, and by the mid-1960s the most radical measures had been undertaken by the Czechoslovaks and Hungarians, who both implemented reforms which gave managers of firms and factories more authority to respond to consumer demand and to control profits. In 1965, Kosygin proposed less ambitious reforms for the Soviet economy, which gave greater autonomy to industrial managers but which maintained central control over planning, pricing and employment. One potential advantage of these reforms was that the Eastern bloc required Western technology (particularly computers) to modernise their industries, yet the ideological orthodoxy of the ruling parties and

[72] Speech by Rusk, 25.2.64, & Washington Embassy commentary, 4.3.64, N103145/1, **FO371/177409**(PRO). PLA24/1, *Cuba and Anglo-American Relations*, 11.6.64, PLA24/1, **FO371/177830**(PRO). CM(64)25th Cabinet conclusions, 30.4.64, **CAB128/38**(PRO).

the devotion of considerable resources to defence limited the scope for East-West trade. Furthermore, Soviet sensitivity concerning the Western theory of 'convergence' - which argued that as the Eastern bloc states adopted market reforms the differences between Communism and capitalism would disappear - showed that ideology still imposed restrictions on commercial ties.[73] In addition to national planning, the economies of the bloc states were co-ordinated through the CMEA (also known as *Comecon*). East European states were bound by bilateral agreements with the USSR, and the bulk of their foreign trade was within the CMEA, thereby restricting commercial contacts with the West. The Romanians had undermined efforts to strengthen the authority of the CMEA over member states, but Foreign Office officials noted that existing arrangements still made it 'difficult for [its] members to pursue more independent policies and difficult for the West to expand its commercial relations in the area'. The co-ordination of the bloc's five year plans through the CMEA also fixed limits on East European trade with the Western powers until the end of the decade.[74] The head of the Northern Department, Howard Smith, spoke for the Foreign Office as a whole when he argued that commercial contacts helped *détente* and was one of the only means the UK had to encourage 'evolution' and help reduce Eastern Europe's economic dependence on the USSR, but officials had few illusions on this issue and believed that the expansion of East-West trade would be a slow process.[75]

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[73] Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp316-317, p.321. Hosking, *Soviet Union*, pp.364-366. R. Braithwaite (Moscow) to M. Fretwell (ND), 15.11.65, NS1102/51, **FO371/182778**(PRO).
[74] C. Parrott (Prague) to Stewart, 8.2.65; & annotations by C. Thompson & unnamed official, 24.2.65, N1102/10, **FO371/182511**(PRO).
[75] Memorandum by H. Smith, 13.1.65, N1151/3, **FO371/182514**(PRO).

The Foreign Office was not the only department with an interest in trade with the Eastern bloc, and often found itself at odds with the Board of Trade, which was more concerned about the UK's balance of payments problem in general and the unfavourable trade gap between Britain and the Soviet bloc in particular. During a visit to Moscow a fortnight after the general election Douglas Jay, the President of the Board of Trade, referred Kosygin to the imbalance of trade between the UK and the USSR, which favoured the latter. Kosygin attributed the low level of Soviet imports from Britain to the fact that 'the offers of many British firms were not (repeat not) competitive either technically or financially'.[76] Kosygin's comments were not unjustified, as British companies were often outbid by rivals producing better quality goods - Soviet bloc states preferred to order merchant ships from Japanese rather than British yards. Yet the scope for increased East-West trade was also constrained by the bureaucratic obstacles imposed by the state import-export companies, hard currency shortages, the inefficiency and delays associated with command economies and the inflexibility of the national plans and the CMEA.[77] The Board of Trade adopted an openly sceptical view of East-West trade, arguing that British exporters could not 'expect to do a roaring trade in consumer goods' with Eastern bloc states, as the latter would spend their hard currency on capital goods - a more problematic area of trade where COCOM rules applied.[78] Throughout 1965, this department, Foreign Office and other interested departments - in particular the DEA, Treasury and the

[76] Moscow to FO, No.2288, 29.10.64, **PREM13/1863**(PRO). See Morgan, *People's Peace*, pp.243-246, on the balance of payments problem in 1964-1965.
[77] J. Kronsten, 'East-West Trade: Myth and Matter', in *International Affairs*, 43/2 (1967), pp.265-281.
[78] I. Gray (BoT) to G. Scullard (FO), 16.6.65, & *Note for Supplementaries*, n.d., N1905/2, **FO371/182525**(PRO).

Ministry of Agriculture - quarrelled over the extent to which trade with Eastern Europe should be encouraged.

Before 1964, with the exception of a list of goods on Open General Licence, Eastern bloc imports could only be permitted by application for a specific licence. The Conservatives removed quota restrictions on a range of bloc imports on the understanding that the Soviet bloc states would raise their imports from the UK and recognise Britain's right to reimpose quotas if it considered such an action necessary. In East Germany's case, the problem of diplomatic recognition prevented a formal bilateral agreement on liberalisation, although the British were as content as other West European states to trade on an informal basis with the GDR. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland accepted partial liberalisation, with Bulgaria agreeing to these terms in 1965, but Romania and the USSR refused to accept the UK's conditions.[79] While the Foreign Office argued that the East Europeans should receive the same treatment as any other foreign powers not bound to Britain by alliance or Commonwealth ties, the Board of Trade opted to reserve the right to reimpose quota restrictions. The Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) was concerned with the implications of liberalisation for Commonwealth sources of supply, while the Ministry of Agriculture opposed any removal of quotas on bloc agricultural imports which would harm British farmers.[80] When officials presented their conclusions in the External Economic

[79] D. MacTavish (BoT) to C. Lucas (Treasury), 11.8.67, Report by Official Committee on Commercial Policy, *East-West Trade Policy*, 11.8.67, **FCO28/59**(PRO).
[80] R. Wall (MAFF) to D. Allen (DEA), 4.5.65; & A. Welch (BoT) to S. Charles (DEA), 4.5.65, N1151/39, **FO371/182514**(PRO).

Policy Committee in November 1965, the Foreign Office position was supported solely by the Treasury.

British trade with Eastern Europe had grown after partial liberalisation in 1964, but a gap remained between the UK's exports (£58 million) and imports (£87 million). Britain had a modest surplus in its trade with Hungary and Romania, counterbalanced by deficits with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The Board of Trade represented the majority view in Whitehall by arguing that there was little scope for the expansion of trade with Eastern Europe, and that 'in the present state of the United Kingdom balance of payments', Britain needed what bargaining power it had to coerce the bloc states into balancing their exports with British imports. The UK also had no interest in seeing the bloc states use sterling from their increased exports to buy goods from Britain's Western competitors.[81] The Foreign Office resented its treatment as representing the minority view, and complained about the fact that other departments continued to refer to the East European states as 'satellites'. Foreign Office officials argued their case on political grounds, asserting that it was in Britain's interests to encourage the 'evolution' of Eastern Europe by increased commercial ties.[82] For other departments, however, 'evolution' was a peripheral concern compared to Britain's economic problems.

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[81] W. Nield (DEA) to W. Hughes (BoT), 17.11.65, *United Kingdom Trade Policy Towards Eastern Europe. A Review by Officials*, N1151/91, **FO371/182514**(PRO).
[82] M. Williams (ND) to S. Charles, 4.5.65, N1151/39; & P. Hancock (FO) to W. Nield (DEA), 25.11.65, N1151/91, **FO371/182514**(PRO).

In February 1966 the Board of Trade argued that Britain should impose restrictions on Soviet imports as a punitive measure, and proposed the imposition of quotas on softwood imports from the USSR. This proposal brought about a direct intervention from Wilson, who expressed his annoyance over an action which, in his opinion, threatened to sour the atmosphere prior to his long-awaited visit to Moscow. The Prime Minister told his Foreign Office Private Secretary, Oliver Wright, 'I know this trade and this [proposal] seems crazy to me. Positively no decision without reference to me'.[83] Jay drew Wilson's attention to the fact that while the UK had imported £119 millions worth of Soviet goods, the USSR had purchased only £46 millions worth from Britain during 1965. The UK could not afford to develop a trade gap with the Eastern bloc alongside the deficits with the USA and other Western countries. Jay argued that if Britain continued to threaten retaliation without taking action Moscow would 'settle down to a long-term policy of financing much of their grain purchases at our expense'. He observed that the threat to reimpose quotas had forced the Poles and East Germans to act to reduce their bilateral trade gaps with the UK, but he did not question whether similar measures would work against the more self-sufficient Soviets, or whether Moscow would simply call London's bluff and turn to the UK's competitors if import restrictions were tightened.[84]

The Foreign Office considered East-West trade to be important as a means of assisting the development of *détente*, but found itself outmanoeuvred by other

[83] Conversation between Gromyko & Jay at FO, 19.3.65, **PREM13/603**(PRO). T. Balogh to PM, 9.2.66; Wright to W. Nicoll (BoT), 10.2.66, **PREM13/1863**(PRO).
[84] Jay to PM, 15.2.66, **PREM13/1863**(PRO).

departments whose attitudes were shaped by the UK's economic difficulties. The Foreign Office did, however, have the support of the Prime Minister, whose intervention in January 1966 thwarted the Board of Trade's efforts to reimpose quotas. Nonetheless, Britain's lack of progress in increasing its exports to the USSR paralleled the poor condition of Anglo-Soviet relations throughout 1965.

A 'difficult time'[85]: Anglo-Soviet and East-West relations from March 1965-February 1966.

Foreign Office officials concluded that Vietnam had led to the 'deterioration ... of East-West relations and the current stagnation of virtually all practical measures where these might be improved'.[86] During his visit to London (17-19 March), Gromyko quarrelled with Stewart over Vietnam, and also attacked the ANF, accusing the British of encouraging West German nuclear ambitions. The Soviet Foreign Minister also made it clear that Kosygin's visit to the UK would be postponed indefinitely. The Northern Department attributed this decision to the Vietnam war and the NATO nuclear-sharing problem, and Howard Smith stated that the Soviets felt 'dangerously vulnerable to Chinese criticism and action' which would intensify if Moscow made 'any move towards better relations with the West'.[87] The possibility of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement over Vietnam was raised by Smith's immediate superior, Denis Greenhill, who suggested that as

[85] Trevelyan to Gore-Booth, 8.7.65, Gore-Booth Papers (MSS Gore-Booth, 91, fol.86-87), Bodleian Library, Oxford.
[86] OPD(O)(65)39(Draft), *Commonwealth Prime Minister's Meeting - Foreign Office Briefs. East/West Relations*, 22.5.65, **CAB148/43**(PRO).
[87] Conversation between Gromyko & Stewart at 10 Downing St, 17.3.65, **PREM13/603**(PRO). Note by Smith, 19.3.65, N1051/57, **FO371/182763**(PRO).

Rolling Thunder continued, the Soviets and Chinese would be drawn together by shared animosity towards the USA.[88] Yet the prevailing opinion in the Foreign Office was that continued Sino-Soviet competition for supremacy in the Communist world would continue to forestall Western efforts to foster *détente* with the USSR. Following another acrimonious meeting with Gromyko in Vienna in May, Stewart informed Wilson that 'it does not look as though the Russians are ready for serious talks on anything at the present time'. Two months later, Trevelyan informed Gore-Booth that as far as both Anglo-Soviet and superpower relations were concerned, the following months would be 'a difficult time'.[89]

Despite the conflict in South-East Asia, Moscow showed no inclination to raise tensions in Europe, even after the FRG decided to hold a *Bundestag* meeting in West Berlin in April. In response, the Soviets and East Germans blocked civilian access and staged military exercises around the city. A worried Erhard was reassured by the American, French and British ambassadors to Bonn that these actions were merely short-term protest measures, and did not constitute a new Berlin crisis. The British ambassador, Frank Roberts, noted that Western military convoys were unaffected by the dispute, and the COS considered the affair to be a minor 'irritant'. Soviet and East German harassment ended once the *Bundestag*'s members left West Berlin, and British officials were reassured by the USSR's evident interest in maintaining the *status quo* in Europe.[90] In contrast, in both

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[88] H. Smith, *Sino-Soviet Relations*, 16.2.65, & annotated comment by D. Greenhill, NS103110/7, **FO371/182754**(PRO).
[89] Conversation between Gromyko & Stewart in Vienna, 16.5.65, **PREM13/603**(PRO). Trevelyan to Gore-Booth, 8.7.65, MSS Gore-Booth, 91, fol.86-87.
[90] Bonn to FO, No.387-388, 5.4.65, **PREM13/343**(PRO). COS65/18th meeting, 6.4.65, **DEFE4/182**(PRO).

London and Paris there was considerable annoyance over what was considered to be Bonn's provocative gesture, and when the Erhard government proposed to follow up the *Bundestag* visit with a *Bundesrat* meeting in West Berlin, the British and the French vetoed the idea.[91] West European diplomats were unhappy at the FRG's refusal to concede that Eastern bloc propaganda attacks on its policies might reflect a genuine fear of resurgent German nationalism, and West Germany was regarded by its allies as an impediment to *détente* because of its rigid stance on reunification and the Hallstein doctrine. Wilson himself regarded the FRG as a nuisance, and believed that Bonn simply had to accept the *de facto* division of Germany.[92]

On 7 July Gromyko informed Trevelyan that Kosygin would not visit Britain in 1965. In one of his last dispatches before completing his service in Moscow, Trevelyan reported that although the Soviets were bent on preserving their position in the Communist world, they would have been prepared to risk a Chinese propaganda onslaught by an exchange of visits if they could gain any concrete results in the process. However, the Soviet leadership did not wish to discuss Vietnam with Wilson, and as a result of Britain's support for US military intervention in Indochina a visit by Kosygin to London 'would cast doubt on their whole-hearted opposition to American policy' in South-East Asia.[93] The cancellation of Kosygin's visit was clearly a disappointment to Wilson, as his

[91] FO to Bonn, No.724, 13.4.65, & annotated comment by PM on letter from T. Bridges (FO) to Wright, 12.4.65, **PREM13/343**(PRO). Paris to State Dept, No.5647, 6.4.65, **MF403**. As occupying powers in Berlin, both Britain and France were in a position to block the *Bundesrat* visit.
[92] UKDelNATO to FO, No.9(Saving), 11.2.65, **FO371/182498**(PRO). Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe*, p.177. Interview with Wilson, 20.1.65, **AHP8/6**.
[93] Moscow to FO, No.1376, 7.7.65; & Moscow to FO, No.1385, 8.7.65, NS1051/97, **FO371/182764**(PRO).

subsequent correspondence with Stewart shows. The Prime Minister could not accept the fact that the Soviets had put their relations with the UK on ice. Moscow had ruled out a visit by Kosygin to Britain, so Wilson proposed to make a trip to the USSR in the autumn of 1965. The Foreign Office was opposed, on the grounds that any visit would 'probably be a more than usually sterile affair which could in fact prove bad for our relations'.[94] Its officials preferred to wait until the USSR had overcome the Chinese challenge to its authority in the Communist world before pressing ahead with bilateral visits. Wilson remained impatient, and in late July he suggested an exchange of visits between the two heads of state, Queen Elizabeth II and the Soviet President, Anastas Mikoyan. Again, the Foreign Office expressed its opposition, arguing that the Queen was unlikely to be happy meeting representatives of a regime which had exterminated the Romanov dynasty in 1918. Furthermore, Mikoyan was reputed to be a virulent Anglophobe following his experiences as a prisoner of British forces assisting the 'Whites' during the Russian civil war. Stewart concurred with official advice, informing Wilson through Wright that an exchange of visits between the Queen and Mikoyan could be used by the Soviets to embarrass the British government.[95]

The condition of Anglo-Soviet relations in the summer of 1965 mirrored the sharp deterioration of relations between the superpowers as a result of the

[94] Note by Smith, 20.6.65, & annotated comment by Greenhill, 5.7.65, NS1051/104, **FO371/182764**(PRO).
[95] Smith, 27.7.65, & T. Bridges (FO) to J. Wright (No.10), 2.8.65, NS1051/109, **FO371/182764**(PRO). Brief No.2(b), *The Secretary of State's Visit to Moscow, 29 November-3 December 1965. Soviet Personalities*, NS1051/180(A), **FO371/182767**(PRO).

Vietnam war.[96] In July, Averell Harriman (who was appointed by Johnson to explore the feasibility of Vietnam peace initiatives) visited Kosygin in Moscow, and the former was struck by the Soviet Premier's reference to the unofficial defence budget cuts agreed by the USA and USSR in 1964. Kosygin seemed to regret the fact that because of Vietnam and the growth of US defence expenditure, similar agreements were no longer possible.[97] Of all the Western powers, only France's relationship with the USSR could be described as cordial. De Gaulle and the Soviet leadership were both opposed to the MLF, apprehensive over West Germany's future intentions, and condemned US intervention in Vietnam. Moscow saw an opportunity to exploit the 'contradictions' between the French and other Western powers, and the appointment of the Deputy Foreign Minister, Valerian Zorin, as Ambassador to Paris was also a sign of Soviet favour towards France. Yet there were limits to Franco-Soviet rapprochement, because despite de Gaulle's private contempt for the West Germans France could not afford a breach with the FRG. Furthermore, the logical implication of the French President's concept of *Europe totale* was the eventual end of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe; an outcome which Moscow was not prepared to accept.[98]

Although political relations between the UK and USSR remained frozen, the British and Soviet governments did succeed in negotiating an agreement

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[96] CIA Special Report, *The Soviet Union Since Khrushchev*, 9.4.65; & SNIE11-11-65, *Soviet Attitudes towards the US*, 26.5.65, *FRUS XIV. The Soviet Union*, (Washington 2001), pp.273-285, pp.289-290.
[97] Moscow to State Dept, 15.7.65, *FRUS XIV*, pp.306-308. Kaiser, *American Tragedy*, pp.397-398, p.493. Moscow to FO, No.1436, 15.7.65, NS103145/26, **FO371/182771**(PRO).
[98] Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, pp.394-397. M. Narinski, 'Les Sovietiques et la decision Francaise', in F. Bozo, P. Mélandri & M. Vaïse, *La France et l'OTAN 1949-1996*, (Paris; CEHD 1996), pp.504-505. P. Reilly (Paris) to Stewart, 18.3.65, **PREM13/324**(PRO).

concerning reciprocal rights for consular officials. The Consular Convention was concluded in December 1965, and was followed by similar agreements with Poland and Bulgaria two years later. These conventions were considered necessary in order to protect British consular officials in the USSR and Eastern Europe from police harassment, and London therefore agreed to the Soviet condition of extending diplomatic immunity to all consular staff.[99] The consular conventions were, however, controversial because during the Cold War both sides used diplomatic missions as a cover for espionage - between 1958 and 1964, eight Soviet and six East European diplomats were declared *persona non grata* by the British because of their involvement in spying.[100] Soviet bloc espionage in the UK aroused strong protests from Conservative MPs, the most outspoken being Commander Anthony Courtney. The Foreign Office regarded Courtney as a nuisance, and described his proposals to reduce representation for Communist states to *chargé* level, and to withdraw all diplomatic privileges, courier and cipher services from Eastern bloc missions as 'impractical and unhelpful'. Officials argued that the existing system was of mutual benefit, as it protected British diplomats in Communist countries too - needless to say, SIS officers also used diplomatic cover for their activities. At a meeting with Courtney at the end of June, Wilson maintained that imposing a quota on Eastern bloc diplomats in the UK would encourage the expulsion of British diplomats in reprisal, and he claimed that the Security Service (MI5) were able to keep suspected intelligence officers under

[99] OPD(67)3rd meeting, 30.1.67, **CAB148/30**(PRO). OPD(67)4: *Consular Conventions with Poland and Bulgaria*, memorandum by Brown, 20.1.67, **CAB148/31**(PRO).
[100] Note by P. Wright (Private Secretary to Gore-Booth), 24.6.65, N1905/5/G, **FO371/182525**(PRO). Brimelow to I. Sutherland (ND), 7.4.66, NS1901/10, **FO371/189001**(PRO).

surveillance. Courtney's campaign led the KGB to take 'active measures' to discredit the MP with smears concerning his private life, but the issue of Soviet bloc espionage continued to fester.[101]

Domestic opinion in the UK was also outraged by the arrest and trial of Gerald Brooke, a British lecturer, in Moscow in July 1965. Brooke received a five year sentence for bringing into the USSR propaganda material produced by a Russian émigré group, the NTS. The outcry the verdict aroused in Britain persisted because of the restrictions imposed on prison visits by the British consul and Brooke's wife. British appeals for clemency were met by Soviet demands for the release of two KGB spies imprisoned in the UK, Peter and Helen Kroger.[102] Much to Wilson's discomfort, Brooke's plight aroused sustained condemnation from the British press and from Parliament. The following April, the Prime Minister informed Mikhail Smirnovsky, Soldatov's successor, that the Brooke case was 'a substantial irritant in Anglo-Soviet relations, which must surely be out of proportion to its importance for the Soviet Union'. Northern Department officials argued that the restrictions imposed by Moscow on consular visits to Brooke contravened the consular convention, and the Soviets were warned that Parliament could refuse to ratify the convention unless the British consul at Leningrad had increased access to Brooke.[103]

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[101] T. Bridges (FO) to M. Reid (No.10), 18.6.65; & conversation between Cdr. A. Courtney MP & PM, 29.6.65, **PREM13/483**(PRO). Andrew & Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archives*, p.531

[102] *Documents on British Policy Overseas. Series III, Volume I (DBPO III, I)*, (HMSO 1997), fn.6, p.7. 'Peter' and 'Helen Kroger' were actually two KGB 'illegal' agents (i.e. operating without diplomatic cover), Morris and Lona Cohen. See Andrew & Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archives*, pp.534-536.

[103] Conversation between PM & Smirnovsky at No.10, 18.4.66, NS1052/23, **FO371/188929**(PRO). Greenhill to H. Matthews (Moscow), 9.9.66, NS1052/36, **FO371/188930**(PRO).

In early September 1965, Wilson again expressed an intention to visit Moscow the following month, asserting that the time was ripe to discuss Vietnam and disarmament problems with the Soviets. The Prime Minister was probably also thinking of the positive effect a trip to the USSR would have on the Labour Party Conference, scheduled for October. Stewart's response drew attention to the manner in which Mikoyan received Trevelyan's successor, Geoffrey Harrison, when the latter presented his credentials on 9 September.[104] The Soviet President lectured Harrison on the iniquities of British policy East of Suez, and condemned the UK's position on Vietnam and NATO nuclear-sharing. Mikoyan declared that while the leadership 'would personally be glad' to play host to Wilson conditions a 'visit would not be desirable under present circumstances'.[105] The Prime Minister was unwilling to take 'no' for an answer. He informed officials that his '"feel"' was 'against the logical evidence', and he called for the Foreign Office to review, on a weekly basis, the prospects for a future visit to the USSR. Near the end of the month, he again asked the Foreign Secretary if 'he wished to reconsider his earlier advice' against meeting Kosygin in Moscow, 'given the changed situation in Soviet relations with the West caused by the Kashmir crisis and the Soviet initiative' - Wilson was referring to the USSR's offer to mediate between India and Pakistan following the war between these two powers over Kashmir (August-September

[104] M. MacLehose (FO) to Stewart, 6.9.65; & Stewart to PM, 9.9.65, NS1051/123/G, **FO371/182764**(PRO).
[105] Moscow to State Dept, No.777 & 779, 9.9.65, **RG59**; stack area 250, row 5-7, box 2788, NARAII.

1965).[106] Stewart's response was that the Foreign Office's assessment remained unchanged.

Although the Prime Minister still had no invitation to Moscow, the Foreign Secretary was scheduled to follow up Gromyko's earlier visit to London with a trip to the USSR (29 November-3 December 1965). Stewart's visit was, Greenhill told Harrison on 3 November, an opportunity to assess whether the Soviets would agree to conclude an NPT if NATO abandoned the MLF and ANF, and whether a breakthrough on non-proliferation would be the 'first step in a genuine *détente*'. The ambassador to Moscow replied a week later, stating that Moscow regarded an NPT as a means of blocking all nuclear-sharing in NATO, and would not offer any concessions in exchange for the scrapping of the MLF or ANF. Harrison compared the non-proliferation issue to the controversy over West German remilitarisation the previous decade, and stated that the Soviets tended to 'tolerate under strong protest what they can't prevent'. Moscow had responded to the FRG's rearmament and admission to NATO by founding the WTO in 1955, an ostensibly parallel response which still 'left the main burden of military response to the Soviet armed forces', and Harrison implied that Moscow's response to any NATO agreement on nuclear-sharing would take a similar form. Harrison concluded Soviets considered the principal purpose of an NPT as being to block West German acquisition of nuclear weapons. He took a frankly sceptical view of

[106] I. Sutherland (ND), 21.9.65; Bridges, 22.9.65, NS1051/134/G, **FO371/182765**(PRO). On the Kashmir war see S. Ganguly, *The Origins of War in South Asia*, (Boulder Co.; Westview Press 1994), pp.63-78. Calvocoressi, *World Politics*, pp.500-501.

the prospects for improved East-West relations, arguing that although Moscow preferred '*détente*' to 'tension', the Soviet concept of *détente* involved:

> [The] suspension, on the one side, of each and every alliance or military build-up against the Soviet Union or other Communist states while, on the other, the struggle is prosecuted, without anti-Communist intervention from outside, in those countries where conditions are ripe for revolution.[107]

At the time Stewart visited Moscow, the Labour government had little to show for over a year of dealing with Khrushchev's successors. Foreign Office officials noted that Soviet propaganda treated the UK as a lackey of American imperialism, and that the leadership had 'at no time since [it] assumed power shown any particular friendliness towards Britain'. While Wilson had met with the Soviet ambassador on several occasions, Harrison had yet to see Kosygin after two months in Moscow.[108] Stewart's briefs commented that the Soviets were concentrating on wooing France, which appeared to be the 'weakest link in the Western Alliance', and considered Britain to be 'a country which has little to offer them'. The prospects for 'serious negotiations' with the Soviet leadership on either Germany or Vietnam were non-existent. The non-proliferation problem was, officials warned, 'a very delicate' issue because the Soviets could force the UK into a position in which it 'had to recognise that a non-proliferation treaty could not be achieved because of our NATO arrangements'.[109]

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[107] Greenhill to Harrison, 3.11.65; & Moscow to FO, No.2343, 9.11.65, NS1051/157, **FO371/182765**(PRO).
[108] No.3, *The Current Soviet Attitude towards the UK*, NS1051/180(A), **FO371/182767**(PRO). Smith to Harrison, 10.11.65, NS1051/161/G, **FO371/182765**(PRO).
[109] No.1, *The Secretary of State's Visit to Moscow, 29 November-3 December 1965. Steering Brief*, NS1051/180(A), **FO371/182767**(PRO).

Having presented the ANF as an alternative to the MLF at the end of 1964, the Wilson government adopted an equivocal position on nuclear-sharing the following year. Throughout 1965 there was a three-way dispute between Washington, London and Bonn, complicated by the fact that none of the governments involved had established a firm policy on nuclear-sharing. The West Germans wanted a solution which gave them a role in policy decisions on NATO's nuclear strategy, but were aware that any demands for a 'hardware solution' involving access to nuclear weapons would antagonise their allies. Within Washington, the MLF idea had lost its appeal, but officials like Ball feared that German resentment over the FRG's 'inequality' within NATO might arouse anti-Western nationalism, thus contributing to a Soviet-German rapprochement similar to the 1922 Rapallo Treaty.[110] In July 1965, Anglo-American differences over non-proliferation were exposed by Washington's reaction to the British draft NPT submitted to the North Atlantic Council (NAC). This draft ruled out the future establishment of a European nuclear force and a nuclear-sharing arrangement within NATO based on majority voting, both of which American officials refused to rule out so as not to offend West German opinion. As a consequence of this dispute, the British were excluded by the Americans from the negotiations with the Soviets on non-proliferation which commenced in the autumn of 1966.[111]

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[110] Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG*, pp.130-132. Ball, *Another Pattern*, pp.261-262, p.275. Conversation between Ball, Bruce, Healey, McNamara, PM, Stewart & Trend at No.10, 26.11.65, **PREM13/805**(PRO).

[111] Schrafstetter & Twigge, 'ANF Proposal', pp.175-177. J. Freeman, *Britain's Nuclear Arms Control Policy in the Context of Anglo-American Relations, 1957-1968*, (NY; St. Martin's Press 1986), pp.213-215.

By late 1965 the Wilson government had switched its support to a 'consultative' solution to the nuclear-sharing problem, as outlined by McNamara's proposed 'special committee'. This concept, from which the Nuclear Planning Group originated, allowed for NATO's non-nuclear members (including the FRG) to be consulted on US nuclear doctrine and strategy. Wilson's reluctance to promote the ANF derived partly from a conviction that a NATO nuclear force would prevent agreement on an NPT. The Prime Minister regarded Soviet and East European protests over NATO nuclear-sharing as being motivated by a genuine fear of a nuclear-armed FRG. In fact, of all the WTO powers Poland was particularly frightened at the prospect of West Germany's participation in an MLF-type force, and encouraged the harsh line the Soviets took towards nuclear-sharing.[112] Wilson also considered deploying the UK's nuclear force East of Suez rather than in the NATO area. Healey considered Ball's concerns over the possibility of Soviet-German rapprochement to be unrealistic, and shared the MoD's view which paid lip-service to 'internationalisation', but favoured national control over the British deterrent. It was principally due to national interests - but also calculations over what would prove acceptable to the USSR and the Eastern bloc states - that the UK chose to support consultation rather than a 'hardware' solution to the Alliance's nuclear-sharing dilemma.[113]

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[112] Freeman, *Arms Control*, pp.218-219. Conversation between PM & Rapacki at No.10, 21.12.64, **PREM13/219**(PRO). Conversation between PM & Soldatov at No.10, 21.7.65, **PREM13/220**(PRO). Interview with Wilson, 20.1.66, **AHP11/4**. Selvage, *Warsaw Pact*, pp.4-5, pp.36-45.

[113] Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG*, p.87. Conversation at No.10, 26.11.65, **PREM13/805**(PRO). Annex A, COS2608/18/11/65, in COS63rd/65, 18.11.65, **DEFE4/192**(PRO). Conversation between H. Cleveland (US representative, NAC) & PM, 19.10.65, **PREM13/671**(PRO).

However, in his discussions with Gromyko and Kosygin, Stewart was told that the Soviets considered consultation between nuclear and non-nuclear powers on planning and weapons systems as a form of proliferation. The Foreign Secretary protested that NATO powers would consider this as proof that Moscow intended to use the non-proliferation issue to meddle with the Alliance's affairs. As Harrison noted, the visit was expected to achieve little, and lived up to expectations. The ambassador did, however, draw some comfort from the 'calm and reserved' tone of discussions, and from the USSR's willingness to preserve bilateral relations with Britain.[114] Stewart's assessment of his trip to Moscow reflected how closely he stuck to his Foreign Office briefs. He informed Wilson that the Soviets were nervous about the prospects of the FRG having 'access' to nuclear weapons, and were also happy to play on widespread Western suspicion of West German motives. Moscow wanted an NPT, but believed that it was the Western powers who would have to pay the price for such a treaty. Stewart was, like Harrison, impressed that the Soviet leaders were now more prepared to talk to their British counterparts. He warned Wilson that this new attitude could not be taken at face value, because Moscow would exploit any differences between Britain and its allies. Nonetheless, the USSR's readiness to maintain its contacts with the UK provided 'an opportunity of discovering whether ultimately they would be prepared to come to an accommodation on the questions of interest to both sides'.[115]

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[114] Moscow to FO, No.2595 & 2596, 30.11.65, **PREM13/805**(PRO). Harrison to Stewart, 11.12.65, NS1051/206, **FO371/182769**(PRO).
[115] Moscow to FO, No.2637, 3.12.65, NS1051/189, **FO371/182768**(PRO). Stewart to PM, *Soviet Relations with the West*, 18.12.65, NS1051/210, **FO371/182769**(PRO).

Aside from the conclusion of the consular convention, Stewart's visit did produce one result, as the Soviet leadership finally agreed to invite Wilson to Moscow, this trip being scheduled to begin on 21 February 1966.[116] Johnson's officials regarded this visit with some apprehension, believing that the Prime Minister would be susceptible to Soviet 'wedge-driving'. McGeorge Bundy informed the President in mid-December that:

> Neither the British nor we have made any money with the Soviets on substantive issues, but British Prime Ministers are always chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow marked "East/West Friendship". The Prime Minister is almost sure to emphasize the value of a non-proliferation treaty and to place it well ahead of NATO nuclear arrangements. We should hold him hard to the fact that a good understanding with the Germans is at least as important and in point of time becomes first.

Johnson cabled Wilson the day before the latter departed for Moscow, warning him against Soviet efforts to use nuclear-sharing to exploit disputes within NATO.[117] In certain respects, the relationship between the two at this point reflected the tensions that had arisen with their predecessors. Wilson's attitude towards the escalation of the Vietnam war were reminiscent of traditional British concerns over the implications of American recklessness in previous Cold War crises, while like Eisenhower in 1959, Johnson showed misgivings over a British Prime Minister's visit to Moscow.

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[116] Moscow to FO, No.2624, 2.12.65, **PREM13/805**(PRO). Moscow to FO, No.2758, 17.12.65, NS1051/214, **FO371/182769**(PRO).
[117] T. Hughes (State Department Bureau of Intelligence & Research - INR) to Rusk, 9.9.65, **NSF**, USSRCF221; & M. Bundy to Johnson, 16.12.65, **NSF**, UKCF215, LBJLIB. Johnson to PM, 20.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO).

Wilson's visit to Moscow: 21-24 February 1966.

Wilson's Foreign Office briefs commented on the domestic friction between the conservative Soviet leadership and the attitude of technocrats and intellectuals who favoured greater personal freedom and decreased CPSU control. On the subject of foreign policy, the Sino-Soviet split had stalled East-West *détente*, and the Soviets were unwilling to offer any concessions on Vietnam. Moscow favoured the maintenance of the *status quo* in Europe, but while the Soviet leadership was cautious in pursuing foreign policy objectives, the USSR's objectives towards the Third World and the spreading of Communism remained unchanged. The Soviets expressed their interest in an NPT, but would not compromise on its opposition to NATO nuclear-sharing, and considered non-proliferation as an issue solely affecting Germany, ignoring the threat of proliferation in the Middle East or South Asia.[118] Regarding Germany, Moscow remained opposed to reunification, while British officials noted that 'Berlin is at present quiet and we have no interest in discussing the situation there'.[119]

The Board of Trade reminded the Prime Minister that while Soviet exports to Britain had risen from £76 million in 1960 to £199 million in 1965, the USSR imported only £37 millions worth of British goods in 1960, which rose to £55 million in 1963 but had declined to £46 million in 1965. Wilson wanted to discuss the trade gap with Kosygin, but Board of Trade officials concluded that

[118] PMV(M)(66)12, *Prime Minister's Visit to the Soviet Union. February, 1966. General Brief*, & PMV(M)(66)5, *Disarmament*, 15.2.66, **CAB133/345**(PRO).
[119] PMV(M)(66)6 & 7, *European Security & Germany & Berlin*, 15.2.66, **CAB133/345**(PRO).

due to the USSR's agricultural problems efforts to increase British exports would be fruitless, because the Soviets would use sterling gained from exports to the UK to buy wheat. Foreign Office officials also hoped for clemency for Brooke, and regarded Soviet proposals to exchange Brooke for the Krogers as unacceptable. The Krogers were convicted spies, and British diplomats feared that a precedent could be set enabling the KGB to blackmail the UK by arresting British visitors to the USSR.[120]

Johnson had warned Wilson against Soviet wedge-driving over NATO nuclear-sharing and non-proliferation, and the Americans clearly had misgivings about what the latter would say to Kosygin.[121] At their first meeting in the Kremlin (22 February), Wilson asserted that bilateral contacts between the UK and USSR 'could be a causal factor in bringing about an improvement or a deterioration in [East-West] relations'. He declared an interest in mutual force reductions in Central Europe, and stated that Britain opposed the creation of a European nuclear force. Turning to Vietnam, the Prime Minister expressed his concerns over a conflict which not only soured East-West relations but had the potential to escalate into a wider war. Wilson tried to persuade Kosygin that both co-chairmen could encourage the USA and North Vietnam towards a negotiated settlement. The Soviet Premier bluntly responded that the USSR had no mandate from Hanoi to discuss a negotiated settlement. Regarding European security, Kosygin cautiously observed that mutual troop withdrawals 'seemed to open an

[120] PMV(M)(66)1, *Anglo-Soviet Trade*, 16.2.66; & PMV(M(66)10, *Gerald Brooke*, 15.2.66, **CAB133/345**(PRO).
[121] Johnson to PM, 20.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO). M. Bundy to Johnson, 16.12.65, LBJLIB.

interesting avenue for discussion', but asserted that *détente* depended on a reduction of American influence in Europe. He was evidently probing Wilson to see if he would follow France's example when he maintained that Britain's expressed interest in improved East-West relations was incompatible with its support for the USA's policies in Europe and South-East Asia.[122]

The following day Wilson met Brezhnev for a discussion dominated by the CPSU Secretary's anti-German diatribes.[123] The Prime Minister also had a second meeting with Kosygin, during which he stated that American policy on nuclear-sharing was 'not monolithic', and that Moscow could wait for 'healthier influences [to] have their effect without trying to apply too much pressure in the negotiations for non-proliferation'. Wilson maintained that British policy took Soviet concerns into account, and therefore favoured consultation within NATO rather than a hardware solution. He also compounded his indiscreet comments on American policy-making with the following references to West Germany:

> The Germans were not seriously committed to the idea of reunification - it had become to some extent a political slogan. The real interests of the West and of the Soviet Union lay in inoculating Germany against a revival of militarism. This view was shared by President Johnson and all proposals for new strategic arrangements within the Western alliance were aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and particularly at guarding against the possibility of a nuclear Germany.

Wilson's comments on inter-allied differences, and his slighting references to American and West German policy-making, would have given the Soviets grounds for believing that they could manipulate the 'contradictions' between the British

[122] Conversation between Kosygin & PM at the Kremlin, 22.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO).
[123] Conversation between Brezhnev & PM at CPSU building, 23.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO).

and their allies. The Prime Minister was oblivious to these considerations, and his main objective in this discussion was to make progress on non-proliferation, hence his suggestion to hold tripartite talks between the two superpowers and the UK at the Foreign Ministerial level. Kosygin replied that the *Politburo* would consider this proposal - he was probably also considering the significance of Wilson's indiscreet comments about the motives of Britain's allies.[124] At their final meeting on the 24th, Wilson argued that the possibility of tripartite negotiations towards an NPT should be cited in the communiqué. Despite the Prime Minister's assertion that '[the] two governments should be seen to be taking action' Kosygin stated that the Soviet leadership needed time to consider Wilson's proposal. Moscow subsequently showed no interest in involving Britain in non-proliferation talks.[125]

Following Wilson's return, Foreign Office officials observed that 'little concrete was expected' from the visit, and that apart from the 'good personal relationship' the Prime Minister thought he had established with Kosygin the visit did not surpass its limited expectations.[126] Four days after he left Moscow, Wilson described his experiences to Johnson in upbeat terms. He depicted Kosygin as a 'tough [and] not very humorous administrative figure', while Brezhnev was 'very impressive' and 'more extrovert'. The Soviets were obsessed with the German problem, and while they wanted progress towards an NPT they were 'genuinely concerned' that the nuclear-sharing issue would block an agreement. There was 'no

[124] Conversation between Kosygin & PM at the Kremlin, 23.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO).
[125] Conversation at Kremlin, 24.2.66, **CAB164/2**(PRO).
[126] FO/CRO to Missions, No.71 Guidance, 25.2.66, NS1051/70, **FO371/188922**(PRO); Harrison to Stewart, 2.3.66, NS1051/90, **FO371/188923**(PRO).

progress' on Vietnam because, Wilson argued, Brezhnev and Kosygin were 'boxed in' by Chinese rivalry and criticism 'in the Soviet bloc' that they were not offering Hanoi sufficient support. He also told Johnson that Brezhnev and Kosygin 'like us, are politicians', and were 'nervous' about the forthcoming 23rd CPSU Congress. Wilson considered that the Soviet leadership's first Party Congress was somehow comparable to his problems in contending with a slim government majority and the truculent Labour left in the House of Commons (a situation the Prime Minister was faced with before the March 1966 election increased his parliamentary majority from 3 to 97 seats).

The Prime Minister maintained that throughout his visit he had spoken 'from a position four-square within the Western Alliance'. Wilson did not refer to the substance of his comments to Kosygin on 23rd, being presumably aware that Johnson would have been infuriated by his comments on American indecision and the need to contain West German ambitions. Wilson's main conclusion was that:

> I am convinced that [the Soviets] want to maintain an active dialogue with the West ... I think that mainly because of Vietnam they see difficulties in the immediate future in having too public a dialogue with you, *but they may be ready to keep it going through us*. But they are in no doubt as I said earlier that they will be negotiating with us as your loyal allies. When I said to them that it must be clear that they were in the Eastern camp and we were unequivocably (sic) in the Western camp, they understood this.[127]

The Prime Minister envisaged a role for himself as an interlocutor between the two superpowers, promoting *détente* while remaining, in a frequently repeated

[127] FO to Washington, No.2237, 28.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO), emphasis added. State Dept to London, N.5006, 26.2.66, **RG59**: 250, 5-7, 2788, NARAII.

phrase, 'four square' with the USA and firmly committed to NATO. In this respect, Wilson drew an explicit contrast between British policy and that of de Gaulle, who announced France's imminent withdrawal from the Alliance's military command structure two weeks after the Prime Minister's return from Moscow.

Conclusions:

Following Stewart's visit to Moscow, Wilson told the Cabinet on 7 December 1965 that Britain was 'gradually achieving [its] aims on non-proliferation and a *détente* in Europe, but we are waiting a long time with little results so far'. The Prime Minister was, however, exaggerating the degree to which British policy had any impact on wider East-West relations. Having committed itself to negotiations towards an NPT, the Labour government was unable to overcome Soviet opposition to a consultative solution to the NATO nuclear-sharing problem, and Wilson failed to persuade Kosygin of the need for three-power talks on non-proliferation during his visit to Moscow.[128] Likewise the Prime Minister could not persuade the Soviets to support his Vietnam peace initiatives. Despite Wilson's long-standing interest in East-West trade, Foreign Office efforts to liberalise the UK's commercial relations with the Eastern bloc were hampered by inter-departmental disputes within Whitehall. The only practical achievements towards *détente* which the Labour government had achieved in 1965 and early 1966 were the Consular Convention and the Prime Minister's visit to Moscow.

[128] Castle, *Diaries*, 7.12.65, p.75.

This lack of progress was due principally to circumstances outside Britain's control, notably the Vietnam war and the ongoing feud between Moscow and Beijing. Khrushchev's successors were unsure of how to approach relations with the Western powers, with Brezhnev's inclination for a relaxation of tensions being countered by Shelepin's demands for a more militant policy towards both the capitalist world and the Yugoslav 'revisionists'.[129] Both Wilson and the Foreign Office's presumption that the Sino-Soviet split was a constraint on *détente* has been supported by Qiang Zhai's research on Chinese foreign policy. Mao sought to promote China as the patron of 'wars of national liberation' in the Third World, and to usurp the USSR's pre-eminence within the Communist world. This policy suffered two damaging setbacks in September 1965, the first being the massacre of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and Sukarno's subsequent fall, which thwarted the developing 'Beijing-Jakarta' axis, and the second being Moscow's offer to mediate between India and Pakistan, which led to the Tashkent summit in January 1966. Yet the USSR's constant need to prove its Communist credentials against Chinese propaganda attacks had an adverse effect on East-West relations. Despite Beijing's urgings, the USSR was not prepared to respond to American intervention in Vietnam by challenging the Western powers over Berlin and the German question. Yet the policy of preserving solidarity with the DRV meant that the Soviet leadership had to distance itself from the USA, not to

[129] Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p.131. Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, p.379.

mention any other state which supported Washington's policies in Indochina.[130] It is also important to emphasise that as far the Soviet side was concerned, the schism with China was a traumatic event. When he was ousted in October 1964, Khrushchev was blamed by his *Politburo* colleagues for exacerbating the split with Beijing, and it was not until the late 1960s that Moscow finally accepted that the Sino-Soviet split was irreparable.[131]

A more pertinent criticism of Wilson's approach to *détente* relates to his emphasis on style rather than the substance of East-West relations. This characteristic was evident in his readiness to visit Moscow after Kosygin's trip to Britain was indefinitely postponed (March 1965), and in the Prime Minister's impatience with the Foreign Office's reluctance to endorse his intention to meet the Soviet leadership during the summer and autumn of 1965. Wilson was not the first British Prime Minister (let alone the first Premier of any country) to be seduced by the glamour of international statesmanship, but he was evidently more concerned with the trappings of diplomacy that with the details of the key issues of East-West relations (Vietnam being the exception). For example, a more cautious politician would have avoided Wilson's indiscreet comments to Kosygin on American and West German policy towards NATO nuclear-sharing (23 February 1966), which was probably interpreted by his hosts as proof of a 'contradiction' within NATO which the USSR could profitably exploit. Wilson took seriously

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[130] Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars. 1950-1975*, (University of North Carolina Press 2000), pp.3-5, pp.115-119, 146-151. Qiang Zhai, *Vietnamese Peace Talks*, p.13. Yang Kuisong, *Changes in Mao Zedong's Attitude toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973*, CWIHP Working Paper 34 (2002), pp.26-34.

[131] V. Zubok, 'The Mao-Khrushchev Conversations, 31 July-3 August 1958 and 2 October 1959', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 12/13 (2001), pp.249-250.

Soviet propaganda attacks on West German 'revanchism' - the Prime Minister had expressed his own concerns over Bonn's future intentions at Chequers (November 1964). Wilson's sentiments reflected the latent suspicion in London concerning Germany's future policies, which was a legacy of the two world wars. During the Berlin crisis, Macmillan had shown his antipathy towards the Germans, and Adenauer in particular, and as noted above Foreign Office officials took seriously Eastern bloc fears of German 'militarism'. According to Vojtech Mastny, the Soviets were privately far more concerned with the American military position in Europe than with the possible resurgence of German nationalism, but it is evident that the Wilson government's position on NATO's nuclear problem was in part a response to London's assessment of what the USSR would tolerate as far as far as nuclear-sharing was concerned.[132]

In his telegram to Johnson following his return to London, Wilson stated that while Britain would remain loyal with its allies, it also had a role in promoting 'an active dialogue' between the superpowers at a time when direct contacts between the superpowers was hampered by Vietnam. The Prime Minister maintained that in direct contrast with France, the UK could contribute to the development of East-West *détente* without breaking ranks with the USA and NATO.[133] Wilson adhered to his belief that Britain could act as an interlocutor between Washington and Moscow throughout his term in office, and this concept was repeatedly employed by the Prime Minister to justify his efforts to establish

[132] Gearson, *Berlin Crisis*, pp.22-23, p.31. V. Mastny, 'Did NATO Win the Cold War ?', in *Foreign Affairs*, 78/3 (1999), pp.178-179.
[133] FO to Washington, 28.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO).

close contacts with the Soviet leadership. He maintained that unlike de Gaulle his policy towards *détente* was constructive as far as the interests of the UK's allies were concerned, and was compatible with Britain's commitment to NATO. However, the Labour government's interest in NATO force reductions, and its determination to reduce BAOR's foreign exchange costs, contributed to the turmoil within the Alliance which followed France's withdrawal in 1966. The contradiction between Wilson's rhetoric of acting 'four square' within the 'Western camp' and his government's intention of reducing the costs of British forces stationed in Germany is examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: EUROPEAN SECURITY AND EAST-WEST *DÉTENTE*. MARCH 1966-JANUARY 1967.

On 7 March 1966 de Gaulle informed Johnson, Wilson and Erhard of his decision to withdraw France from NATO's integrated command structure by July. The French President's action was not unexpected. The US military presence and NATO integration challenged de Gaulle's objective of promoting France as Western Europe's spokesman in negotiations with the USSR. French opposition to the American doctrine of 'flexible response' paralysed NATO's strategic review, and de Gaulle had argued since early 1964 that gradual East-West rapprochement in Europe, and the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, meant that the USSR was no longer a threat to Europe, and that NATO was therefore irrelevant. De Gaulle's actions did not represent a complete breach with the Western allies - he declared that France would remain party to the North Atlantic Treaty unless the improvement of East-West relations justified its renunciation. Paris also concluded a bilateral agreement with Bonn to retain French forces in West Germany.[1]

Although no other Alliance member followed de Gaulle's lead, NATO suffered a blow to its political credibility, which was exacerbated by widespread sentiment within Western Europe that as the Soviet menace receded, the Alliance's rationale had diminished. NATO governments were inclined to reduce their defence expenditure because of this perception that the threat posed by the USSR had

[1] F. Bozo, *La France et l'OTAN. De la guerre froide au nouvel ordre européen*, (Paris; Masson 1991), pp.79-81. See pp.233-234 for de Gaulle's letter to Johnson dated 7.3.66.

decreased.[2] Wilson and his Ministers had concluded at the Chequers conference (November 1964) that while unilateral reductions of BAOR would be politically harmful, there was no military justification for retaining NATO force levels at their present size. The Labour government, like its Conservative predecessors, was also concerned with the foreign exchange costs incurred by British forces in Germany, and this issue became more pressing after July 1966, when the seamen's strike led to a run on the pound and the threat of devaluation. In response, the Wilson government cut defence expenditure further and demanded that the FRG completely offset BAOR's costs, or accept the 'redeployment' of British troops to the UK. The offsets crisis, and similar pressures on the American military presence in Germany, threatened to weaken NATO at a time when the Warsaw Pact was enhancing its military capabilities.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the state of European security and East-West relations in the context of France's withdrawal from NATO, the WTO conference at Bucharest (July 1966), the reappraisal of West Germany's relationship with Eastern Europe away from the hard-line approach epitomised by Adenauer, and the trilateral dispute between the USA, UK and FRG over the foreign exchange costs of American and British forces stationed in West Germany. In addition, this chapter discusses London's view of the prospects of the 'evolution' of Eastern Europe, and Britain's efforts to encourage *détente* by promoting a 'declaration of principles and proposals governing European affairs and relations', which was intended both as a confidence-building measure and as a

[2] Duffield, *Power Rules*, p.166.

means of ensuring that the agenda of East-West rapprochement was not monopolised by France.

France's withdrawal from NATO: March-July 1966.

Stewart informed Cabinet colleagues in January 1966 that both the French and the Soviets wanted a 'reduction or removal' of US forces from Europe, and the 'break-up of the integrated Western Alliance in its present form'.[3] After France's withdrawal from NATO, the British encouraged the other thirteen member states to reaffirm their commitment to the Alliance, yet as Evelyn Shuckburgh (the head of the UK delegation to NATO) noted, de Gaulle's decision had serious implications. Shuckburgh stated that French propaganda portrayed the Alliance as 'a ponderous and rigid organisation', reflecting the character of the Cold War in the 1940s and 'incapable of adapting itself to [the] changing political circumstances and military needs' of the 1960s. While this was 'a distorted picture', this image reflected wider political and public opinion in Western Europe.[4] In Britain's case these comments reflected not only the anti-NATO attitude of the Labour left, but the conclusions of the Chequers conference. The Cabinet Secretary, Burke Trend, agreed that 'in minimising the Soviet threat' and 'working for more enduring relations with the Soviet bloc', the French President was 'playing on a responsive chord in

[3] C(66)16: *France. General de Gaulle's Foreign Policy over the next two years*, memorandum by Stewart, 28.1.66, **CAB129/124**(PRO).
[4] B. Heuser & C. Buffet, 'Résister à la Tempête: les reactions Britanniques au départ de la France de l'intégration militaire de l'OTAN', in Bozo, Mélandri & Vaïse, *France et l'OTAN*, pp.447-448. Shuckburgh to Stewart, 23.3.66, **CAB164/28**(PRO).

sections of French and European opinion'. Moscow could exploit improved Franco-Soviet relations to drive a wedge between the USA and its West European allies, while France's withdrawal could encourage Norway and Denmark (both wary of antagonising the USSR), or Greece and Turkey (both at odds over Cyprus) to follow suit.[5]

From London's perspective, de Gaulle was not only a threat to Western unity, but the exponent of a rival version of *détente*. Wright told the Prime Minister on 11 March that 'General de Gaulle is very uncooperative and his methods could be dangerous, but not all of his ideas are wrong'. Wilson's Private Secretary shared de Gaulle's view that the threat of war in Europe had greatly diminished and that there was considerable scope for the improvement of East-West relations. Wilson was clearly impressed with Wright's arguments, as he repeated them to the Foreign Secretary four days later. The Prime Minister told Stewart that de Gaulle's nationalism, visceral anti-Americanism and 'rogue elephant tactics' were deplorable, but some of his views on international political developments 'may be more up to date and in tune with the times than our own'. While British objectives in NATO - to support the American commitment to Western Europe's defence, avert any revival of German nationalism, and to maintain a collective deterrent against Soviet aggression - remained valid, the effort to bolster NATO after France's withdrawal should include efforts to 'parley' with the Eastern bloc powers. Wilson again argued that NATO could afford to

[5] OPD(66)44: *France and NATO*, memorandum by Trend, 1.4.66, **CAB148/27**(PRO). See the map in Appendix 4 showing the European alliances in 1964.

reduce its forces, and that Britain could press 'first within the Alliance and then with the Russians, for a phased and balanced reduction of forces on either side of the Iron Curtain'. Regarding Germany, he suggested to Stewart that British policy should now openly oppose a 'hardware solution' to NATO's nuclear-sharing debate, as this would be 'totally incompatible' with efforts to promote East-West *détente*.[6] Wilson expressed these ideas to Johnson at the end of the month, although he placed greater emphasis in his message on the importance of maintaining both the US commitment to Europe and NATO unity.[7]

Stewart concurred with Wilson's arguments, informing the FRG's Foreign Minister, Gerhard Schröder, on the 16 March that other Western states seemed to share de Gaulle's view 'that the Russian threat was not as strong as before'. Johnson also agreed with the Prime Minister's assessment on *détente*, although he still maintained that Erhard would not accept a nuclear-sharing arrangement which did not give the FRG 'equality' with the USA and Britain.[8] Healey initially expressed concerns that any efforts to promote troop cuts in Central Europe 'would be regarded by our allies as a body blow which might complete the work of destruction done by de Gaulle'. Nevertheless, there was general consensus in Whitehall that NATO was, in Shuckburgh's words, 'top-heavy and unwieldy', and that although the Alliance's first aim was the collective defence of Western Europe, NATO members should place greater emphasis on 'developing the *détente*

[6] Wright to PM, 11.3.66, **PREM13/1043**(PRO). PM to Stewart, 15.3.66, **CAB164/28**(PRO).
[7] PM to Johnson, T135/66, 29.3.66, **PREM13/1043**(PRO).
[8] Conversation between Schroeder & Stewart at FO, 16.3.66, **PREM13/927**(PRO). FO to Washington, No.5288, 23.5.66, **PREM13/1044**(PRO).

(sic) with the Communist *bloc*', and on progress towards 'disarmament and a permanent settlement in Europe'.[9]

Trend informed Ministers at the end of March that although NATO was still needed to deter Soviet expansion, the Alliance had to adapt to the changing political situation in Europe. The USSR was unlikely to respond to initiatives on German reunification and conventional force reductions, which would threaten Moscow's authority over Eastern Europe, yet Britain could contribute to the development of *detente* by promoting an NPT and a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The unspoken presumption here was that even if the Soviets rejected arms control measures, the British and other Western governments could demonstrate to their electorates that they were responsive to the pro-*détente* popular mood. Regarding NATO, the British objective should be 'to take the opportunity to re-fashion the alliance on a more efficient and more economical basis' and to 'build a firmer foundation for East-West relations in Europe'. The OPD discussed the substance of the Cabinet Secretary's suggestions and endorsed them in early April. Ministers acknowledged 'the need for a militarily viable United Kingdom contribution to allied defence in Europe', but within the context of a reduction of NATO force levels. De Gaulle's argument that NATO was a Cold War relic appealed to West European opinion, and while French policy threatened Western solidarity the British perceived an opportunity for a 'fresh

[9] Healey to PM, 23.3.66, & Shuckburgh to Stewart, **CAB164/28**(PRO).

start' in the Atlantic Alliance.[10] Wilson later expressed his views to Rusk in June, stating that:

> If General de Gaulle is sincere in his views about the need for effective *détente* as a means towards such desiderata as German reunification, the difference between us is not over ends but over means. We believe that if everybody in the alliance acted like de Gaulle, far from *détente* a truly dangerous situation would be created in Europe.

The 'best way to *détente*', Wilson argued, was to 'preserve a solidarity of purpose' within NATO, and to approach the Soviets with 'forward-looking policies' on arms control. The Prime Minister described the Soviets as 'realists' who would use de Gaulle 'as a divisive factor in NATO', but were aware that 'his real influence in the world, and above all on the conduct of United States policy, was marginal'. Wilson argued that Britain, by contrast, 'still had such influence and when it came to practical politics rather than propaganda ... the Russians would rather talk to us'.[11]

Wilson's comments to the US Secretary of State reflected his impression, derived from his February 1966 visit to Moscow, that Britain could play an active role in promoting East-West *détente*. In contrast with France, the UK would perform this role without breaking ranks with the USA or NATO. The British therefore sought the approval of their allies for the 'declaration of principles' they had discussed with the Czechoslovaks. However, after July 1966 the effort to recover the foreign exchange costs of BAOR forestalled any systematic attempt to undertake a major initiative in East-West diplomacy.

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[10] OPD(66)44, **CAB148/27**(PRO). OPD(66)18th meeting, **CAB148/25**(PRO). OPD(O)(66)6th & 7th meetings, 18.3.66 & 28.3.66, **CAB148/68**(PRO).
[11] M. Palliser to M. MacLehose (FO), 4.6.66, **PREM13/902**(PRO). Conversation between PM & Rusk at No.10, 10.6.66, **PREM13/2264**(PRO).

Détente and the 'declaration of principles': March-December 1966.

Like other British and West European politicians, Wilson considered West German policy to be an impediment to *détente* because of Bonn's intransigence on the Oder-Neisse line and the Hallstein doctrine. Yet by early 1966 there were signs that the FRG's policy towards the Eastern bloc was changing. The Erhard government oversaw a policy of *Bewegung* (slow movement forward), and although diplomatic relations had yet to be established between Bonn and the WTO powers the West Germans opened trade missions in East European capitals. As Frank Roberts observed, West German public opinion generally favoured rapprochement with the Eastern bloc states. The FRG's 'peace note' of 25 March was condescendingly described by the Foreign Office to be 'a move in the right direction', despite its 'unnecessarily polemical passages' attacking Soviet and Polish foreign policy. The 'peace note' reiterated Bonn's pledge not to build nuclear weapons, declared that the Munich settlement had 'no territorial significance', and offered the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia in particular an agreement for the mutual renunciation of force. The note, however, made no mention of recognition of either Germany's Eastern frontier or the GDR.[12] The British encouraged the West Germans to be more proactive in improving relations with the East Europeans, but as Andrew Stark (one of Roberts' subordinates in the Bonn embassy) noted, *détente* required greater flexibility on the part of the Communist states too. Stark commented that while Britain tended to approach foreign policy

[12] Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe*, pp.177-181. Calvocoressi, *World Politics*, pp.222-223. MacLehose to Wright, 24.3.66; memorandum from FRG Embassy in London, 25.3.66, **PREM13/928**(PRO).

problems seeking 'what is "realistic" i.e. practical and likely to be obtainable', the more legalistically-inclined Germans 'always begin by trying to identify what is "right"'. Although Bonn was 'self-righteous' concerning the legitimacy of the Oder-Neisse line and the rights of ethnic Germans expelled from Eastern Europe in 1945, the Czechoslovaks and Poles were inclined to be as sanctimonious. The FRG was 'often thick-skinned and insensitive', and 'blind to anti-German feeling in Eastern Europe', but while many British officials believed that the latter sentiment was a principally a legacy of Nazi brutality during World War Two, Stark argued that Bonn did had grounds for arguing that anti-German hostility was also being 'deliberately fostered' by Prague, Warsaw and Moscow.[13]

The West German 'peace note' was rejected by the Soviets and their allies in the declaration issued by the WTO Consultative Committee following its meeting in Bucharest (July 1966).[14] On one level, the Bucharest declaration was a show of unity from a Pact affected by Polish and Czechoslovak demands for an alliance similar to that of NATO, with a political consultative body equivalent to the NAC, and a greater role for the East Europeans in the Soviet-dominated military structure.[15] At the same time, the Romanians intended to reduce the Warsaw Pact's authority over member states, just as Bucharest had challenged the increased co-ordination of national economies within the CMEA the previous year. On 7 May 1966 Nicolae Ceausescu, the Romanian Communist party secretary,

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[13] A. Stark (Bonn) to H. Smith, 22.2.66, N103118/1, **FO371/188477**(PRO).
[14] T. Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970*, (Baltimore 1970), pp.285-287. Craig Nation, *Red Star*, p.247. Bucharest to FO, No.215, 8.7.66; Moscow to FO, No.1325, 11.7.66, **PREM13/902**(PRO).
[15] V. Mastny, ' "We are in a Bind": Polish and Czechoslovak attempts at Reforming the Warsaw Pact, 1956-1969', *CWIHP Bulletin*, 11 (1998), pp.230-249. NIE11-15-66, *Reliability of the USSR's East European Allies*, 4.8.66, **MFF15/412**.

publicly attacked the division of Europe into 'military blocs' and asserted that Romania would follow an 'independent' foreign policy. Ceausescu's condemnation of the 'foreign' troop presence in Central Europe was, Northern Department officials argued, implicitly directed against the USSR as well as the USA. British diplomats correctly concluded that while Romania was unlikely to leave the WTO or denounce its treaty with the USSR, Bucharest would oppose any extension of Moscow's authority over Warsaw Pact members.[16]

The Bucharest declaration contained the standard Eastern bloc references to West German 'revanchism', recognition of the Oder-Neisse line and East German sovereignty, and a blunt attack on US policy in Vietnam. The declaration also referred to the need for 'good neighbourly relations' and increased commercial, cultural and scientific exchanges between East and West European states, and did not explicitly exclude American participation in any future European security conference. Harrison stated that despite the predictable anti-American and anti-German propaganda, the declaration was 'a more sophisticated document than the Russians could produce on their own'. The emphasis placed on 'good-neighbourly co-operation' between Eastern and Western Europe, in the ambassador's view, reflected 'the thinking and interests of the Western minded countries of the bloc'.[17] The Northern Department concurred with this assessment, and were disappointed that the Americans regarded the Bucharest declaration as insignificant.

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[16] H. Smith to Greenhill, N1073/24, 24.5.66; D. Bendall (Washington) to Smith, 26.5.66, N1073/34, **FO371/188493**(PRO). On Romania and the WTO, see Mastny, 'In a Bind', p.232.
[17] Moscow to FO, No.1325, 11.7.66, **FO371/188494**(PRO). Smith to Greenhill, 15.7.66, N1073/85, **FO371/188495**(PRO).

In contrast, the British concluded that while the Bucharest declaration was 'turgid', and struck a 'Gaullist tone' in calling on European states to solve their problems 'without interference from outside' (i.e. the USA), it was 'also clearly regarded by the Warsaw Pact governments as a major Declaration of policy'. The Bucharest conference provided the impetus for the UK's proposed declaration on East-West relations.[18]

The 'statement of principles and proposals governing European affairs and relations' originated with a conversation between Stewart and the Czechoslovak ambassador on 17 March 1966. The Foreign Secretary was handed a 'declaration of principles', which called upon European powers to respect the sovereignty and territorial rights of other states, and to avoid taking 'any steps which might result in aggravating international tensions'. Stewart concluded that while these clauses were directed against West Germany, the references to trade, cultural agreements and technological co-operation had some merit. The ambassador to Prague, Cecil Parrott, was more sceptical, and regarded the declaration to be 'platitudinous' and open to 'misleading interpretation'. Parrott described the Czechoslovak regime's foreign policy as 'Stalinist', particularly regarding the German question, and the ambassador to Prague noted that the Czechoslovaks had assisted the Soviets in employing 'subversive measures to threaten our interests in third countries (not to speak of their [intelligence] activities in our own)'. Parrott concluded that the Czechoslovak initiative was pure 'wedge-driving'.[19] Gore-Booth and other Foreign

[18] Bendall to Smith, 21.7.66, N1073/81; & I. Sutherland to Greenhill, 25.7.66, N0173/81, **FO371/188495**(PRO).
[19] Stewart to Parrott, 17.3.66, N1075/3; Parrott to Stewart, 2.4.66, N1075/10, **FO371/188497**(PRO).

Office officials likewise regarded the Czechoslovak declaration with suspicion, but supported the Northern Department's proposal to approach NATO allies with a British draft declaration.[20]

Like the ambassador to Prague, Trend had his doubts about the utility of a declaration, arguing that at best the document would be 'watered down' into a 'collection of platitudes', while at worst the declaration could provoke questions from other NATO powers on British intentions - concerning, for example, mutual force reductions, German reunification, and non-proliferation - 'at a time when we are not yet ready to answer them'. Michael Palliser, who had replaced Oliver Wright as Wilson's Private Secretary, considered the Foreign Office draft to be 'like trying to pinch the General's pants'.[21] Howard Smith testily responded was that 'it is de Gaulle who has stolen our trousers and not we his' by claiming to be Western Europe's spokesman for *détente*.[22] At the beginning of July, the OPD met to discuss the declaration, which contained broad statements on the need for increased bilateral and multilateral co-operation in trade, scientific co-operation, on sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The Foreign Office proposed to invite European governments to endorse the declaration unilaterally, thus allowing neutral states to participate and avoiding a joint WTO endorsement which would embarrass Western powers by involving the GDR. Stewart conceded that the draft made no substantial recommendations, but was 'the kind of general declaration to

[20] Gore-Booth, *A Declaration on Europe*, 2.5.66 & annotation by Greenhill, 3.5.66, N1075/11; Stewart to Shuckburgh, 12.5.66, N1075/13, **FO371/188497**(PRO).
[21] Trend to PM, 4.7.66, **CAB165/28**(PRO). PC(66)30, *East-West Relations*, 17.6.66; & annotated comments by Palliser & PM, 21.6.66, **PREM13/902**(PRO).
[22] Palliser to D. Morphet (FO), 25.6.66, **PREM13/902**(PRO). Smith, *A Declaration on Europe*, 17.6.66, & Stewart to PM, 20.6.66, N1075/21, **FO371/188498**(PRO).

which eastern European countries attached importance', while 'the reiterated renunciation of the use of force to settle disputes' would be welcomed by the FRG's Eastern neighbours.[23]

The OPD approved the draft, but the declaration received a lukewarm response from the American and West German representatives in the NAC. The latter complained that the text made no reference to reunification, and that its language bore a close resemblance to Eastern bloc propaganda statements. Washington objected that the draft was 'overly European in tone and could lead to a misunderstanding by the East on the essential role of the United States in a European settlement'. The British suspected that Harlan Cleveland, the US representative to the NAC, was deliberately stalling discussion on the declaration, and that the Americans wanted 'our proposal for a declaration [to be] submerged in a great deal of far-ranging discussion of a largely theoretical kind'.[24] While the Foreign Office proposed that the declaration be approved within NATO, then presented to 'one or more countries in Eastern Europe', the Americans preferred a joint declaration 'without either joint or individual subscription by the countries of the Warsaw Pact nor any form of bilateral negotiation'.[25] Although Johnson reaffirmed his administrations' interest in 'bridge-building' in a speech on 7 October, by this time the State Department openly opposed the British draft declaration. Smith presumed that Washington intended to '[whip] in the less

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[23] OPD(66)76: *East/West Relations; A Declaration*, memorandum by FO, 1.7.66, **CAB148/28**(PRO). OPD(66)31st meeting, 5.7.66, **CAB148/25**(PRO). The 'Declaration' is copied in Appendix 2.
[24] State Dept brief, *Visit of UK Foreign Minister George Brown October 14 1966. East-West Relationships*, 12.1.0.66, **MF411**. Lord Hood to Shuckburgh, 1.7.66, N1075/27, **FO371/188498**(PRO).
[25] Washington to FO, No.2118, 19.7.66; Sutherland to Greenhill, 21.7.66, N1075/50, **FO371/188499**(PRO).

resolute members of the Alliance' by concentrating on NATO's military problems, and that any discussions on East-West relations would 'have a disintegrating effect' on NATO.[26] Greenhill pessimistically concluded that with Washington opposing the declaration and in a position to influence the FRG, and Paris unwilling to support an initiative which detracted from de Gaulle's prestige, the draft would only attract the support of some of the minor NATO states. He also considered that the WTO powers were unlikely to respond to any initiative following the Bucharest conference.[27]

Despite American concerns, the NAC concurred with the British decision to pass the draft to the Czechoslovaks and William Barker, Parrott's successor in Prague, presented the declaration on 12 December. The 'declaration of principles' made no substantial reference to the central problem of European security, which was the division of Germany. The Foreign Office's Planning Staff had debated, and ruled out, a renewed initiative on German reunification in August 1966. From Moscow, Harrison stated that while the Bucharest declaration indicated greater flexibility on bilateral diplomatic relations with Western powers, the Soviets still showed no real willingness to discuss the 'substance of major issues'. The American attitude towards European initiatives was described by one British diplomat in Washington as 'ambivalent'. The Americans appeared 'convinced that the Russians and the Russians only hold the key to a European settlement, and

[26] Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson 1972), pp.474-475. Note by Smith, 28.6.66, N1075/28, **FO371/188498**(PRO).
[27] Dean to Greenhill, 17.8.66, N1075/6; note by Greenhill, 25.8.66, N1075/77; UKDelNATO to FO, No.593, 3.11.66, N1075/103, **FO371/188500**(PRO).

that any serious progress must be based on a prior United States/Soviet understanding'. However, US-Soviet relations showed no sign of improvement. Washington hoped to see Western Europe emerge 'as a cohesive force capable of standing up to the Soviet Union on its own with the minimum of United States support', a sentiment which reflected growing American concern at the financial costs of the USA's commitment to NATO. Yet paradoxically, Johnson administration officials were also concerned lest the Europeans show too much independence, this being due to their suspicion of de Gaulle's motives, apprehension over any revival of German nationalism, and the feeling that European security was 'too important to allow control to pass from their own hands'.[28] In fact, Washington faced a dilemma, in which the political need to ensure that de Gaulle did not monopolise West European support for *détente* coexisted with the suspicion that the Soviets would exploit this sentiment to create discord within NATO.[29]

This attitude underpinned the American reaction to the declaration of principles. While the British considered that the French withdrawal from NATO presented an opportunity to promote East-West *détente*, the Americans were apprehensive that Alliance unity could be undermined by ill-timed diplomatic approaches to the Eastern bloc. Washington and London addressed the problem of restoring Alliance cohesion from different directions, the former concentrating on

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[28] J. Nicholls to F. Roberts, 12.8.66; Harrison to Nicholls, 26.8.66; & M. Stewart (Minister, Washington Embassy) to Nicholls, 2.9.66, **FO953/2499**(PRO).
[29] F. Costigliola, '"Not a Normal French Government": la réaction Américaine au retrait de la France de l'OTAN', in Bozo, Mélandri & Vaïsse, *France et l'OTAN*, p.411, p.415.

intra-Western relations while the latter concluded that de Gaulle should not be permitted to monopolise widespread support in Western Europe for *détente*. Ironically, having concluded by the spring of 1966 that Britain could rally NATO and influence the Alliance's strategic doctrine and its approach to *détente*, Wilson and his Ministers devoted far less time to the 'declaration of principles' than to the issue of BAOR's foreign exchange costs.

Assessing the 'evolution' of Eastern Europe: The 'declaration of principles' and the Ambassador's conference on Eastern Europe, April-July 1966.

When the PUSD's Planning Staff drafted the 'declaration of principles' in June 1966, Gore-Booth wondered whether its text would help legitimise East European regimes hostile to the UK and its allies. The Permanent Under-Secretary suggested employing the Soviet tactic of appealing to the subjects of 'imperial' rule, addressing the draft to (for example) the 'Polish people' as opposed to 'the Polish Government'. Smith reminded Gore-Booth that British policy towards the Eastern bloc was intended to avoid drawing 'too sharp a line between the people and the rulers', or to openly attempt to split the East European states from the Soviet Union.[30] This exchange of opinions, and the biannual conference of ambassadors to the USSR and East European states held in London (April 1966), raised the question of what results 'evolution' would have on the Communist regimes, and whether their moderation, or demise, would suit British interests.

[30] Gore-Booth to Nicholls, 10.6.66; & Smith, *East/West Relations*, 14.6.66, N1075/66, **FO371/188500**(PRO).

The Foreign Office had been frustrated throughout 1965 by the unwillingness of other departments in Whitehall, notably the Board of Trade, to reduce restrictions on Eastern bloc trade with the UK. Commerce, cultural relations and scientific co-operation were the principal means of developing British contacts with the Eastern European states, but while most restrictions on Eastern bloc imports had been lifted by the Board of Trade, West European competitors like France had gone further in liberalising their trade with Eastern European states.[31] Between 27 April and 2 May, the ambassadors to the WTO states, Yugoslavia and West Germany met with the Foreign Secretary and other officials to discuss the course of 'evolution', with reference to Eastern Europe rather than the USSR, where Khrushchev's successors had clamped down on political dissent. The prospects for increased trading relations were also discussed alongside the political aspects of East-West relations.[32]

Participants at the conference were reminded by the MoD's Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) that most of the Eastern bloc states had experimented with reforms to the command economy - Czechoslovakia had initiated proposals associated with the liberal economist Ota Sik, while Hungary had introduced the New Economic Mechanism (NEM).[33] The DIS concluded that even with the aid of computer technology central planning for increasingly large and diverse economies

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[31] Inter-departmental meeting at Cabinet Office, 25.12.65, N1151/13; P. Rhodes to C. Lowry (BoT), 15.11.66, N1151/47, **FO371/188509**(PRO).

[32] Smith, *Secretary of State's Visit to Moscow*, Briefs 2(a) & 2(b), NS1051/283, **FO371/188927**(PRO). The following two pages summarise the minutes of the *Conference of Ambassadors from Eastern Europe*, 27.4.66-2.5.66, N1152/55, **FO371/188510**(PRO).

[33] For the Kosygin reforms, see Hosking, *Soviet Union*, pp.364-366. For the Sik reforms and the NEM, see Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.316-317, & pp.321-322, and the obituary for the Hungarian deputy premier, Jeno Fock, in the *Independent*, 28.5.01.

was increasingly impossible. Harrison noted that the USSR had made less progress on reform than the East Europeans, attributing this to the fact that the Soviets would have no one to bail them out if internal liberalisation led to the breakdown of the centrally-planned economy. He also stated that Kosygin's reforms clashed with the CPSU's monopolisation of decision-making. Although Sir George Clutton, the ambassador to Warsaw, commented that the Poles were forced by Moscow to 'buy in Russia what they would rather buy in the West', other diplomats present were generally optimistic that the process of economic reform would gradually open up East European markets. Parrott observed that for all the USSR's apparent technological prowess (as manifested by its space programme) 'all the East Europeans could see of Russian achievements would be shoddy productions which flooded their markets'. If the Warsaw Pact states had greater autonomy in internal economic policies, they would rely less on the CMEA and more on trade with Western countries.

The Foreign Office objected to the fact that Eastern Europe was regarded within Whitehall as a 'special case', in which quotas were imposed on certain Soviet bloc imports which did not apply to other foreign producers. Board of Trade officials asserted that Eastern Europe remained a 'special case' because the ruling regimes could make arbitrary decisions irrespective of economic logic, and due to the lack of transparency in dealing with Communist states. The Board of Trade also intended to reverse the imbalances in trade between the UK and states like Poland and the USSR, which involved the Eastern bloc accepting more British

exports, rather than the reverse. Howard Smith expressed the Foreign Office view by stating that as reforms opened the East European economies, Britain had to remove its remaining trade restrictions or surrender the advantage to continental competitors. The ambassadors and Northern Department officials were concerned that France and the FRG in particular appeared more successful than the UK in securing contracts from Eastern bloc states - a sentiment which reflected contemporary concerns at Britain's poor economic performance in comparison with its continental competitors. The regional ambassadors concluded that France and West Germany derived commercial benefits because both imposed fewer restrictions on East-West trade, although William Marpham, the ambassador to Sofia, noted that French and West German businesses trading in Bulgaria offered lower prices than their British counterparts.

As far as political relations were concerned, Stewart admitted that 'he could not record much tangible progress' in East-West relations during his tenure of office, and he asked the ambassadors if the East Europeans could encourage the USSR to adopt a more forthcoming attitude towards *détente*. Clutton observed that the Poles and Czechoslovaks favoured the reduction of tensions in Europe, but the former were still virulently anti-German, and Parrott stated that Prague rigidly adhered to the Soviet line in international relations. The issue of Eastern bloc espionage in Britain was discussed in the context of cultural relations, a reflection of Parliamentary protests that bilateral cultural exchanges be curtailed in reprisal for Brooke's imprisonment. Harrison in particular showed little sympathy for

Brooke's plight, stressing instead that efforts to exert pressure on the Soviets by curtailing cultural activities would be counter-productive, as Western theatre productions and concerts at least gave Eastern bloc citizens a glimpse of an alternative to Communism. With the exception of Parrott, who commented on the activities of the Czechoslovak equivalent of the KGB, the StB, the ambassadors treated the issue of Soviet bloc espionage in Britain as a secondary concern.

The head of the Northern Department summed up the conference's conclusions, stating that while the East Europeans would remain aligned with the USSR, internal reforms would continue to alter the character of the Soviet bloc states, thus contributing to the alleviation of East-West differences. The conclusions of the ambassador's conference rested upon the presumption that the process of 'evolution' would not be reversed by the ruling regimes. Smith acknowledged that British policy had hitherto focused overwhelmingly on the USSR rather than on the Eastern European countries, yet while 'power still lay with the Soviet Union ... the seed of future change (affecting even the Soviet Union itself) might lie elsewhere'. Foreign Office officials were optimistic about the progress of internal reform and the enhancement of East-West contacts that would result, and were sanguine about the ability of the Communist parties to manage economic reform while controlling pressures for political liberalisation. Smith stated in June that while East Europeans would choose an alternative to Communism if given a free choice, 'there is [no] unrest; there is not very likely to be unrest; and I would doubt whether it is in our interest that there should be unrest' in the region. The

process of change in the Eastern bloc was influenced by 'the confrontation of the Communists with ... objective economic and political realities', and Smith assumed that the regimes would be influenced by pragmatism rather than dogma when dealing with these 'realities'.[34]

Clutton was the only regional ambassador to question this interpretation. The ambassador to Warsaw agreed that the East Europeans should not be encouraged to split from Moscow, although the reason he gave was that the only alternative to Soviet authority over the region was 'German domination'. However, he reminded Smith that the Poles had been expected to move towards a less authoritarian and more 'national' variant of Communism after the upheavals of 1956, but Poland had lapsed into socio-economic stagnation, with only marginal improvements in living standards. Clutton stated that 'in the Communist system and in an omnipotent state the free intellect is an illusion, since if the intellect is allowed to be free it destroys the system'. He observed that 'I thought that my colleagues and I were fairly well agreed that if the present reforms within various countries were carried out to their logical conclusions they must sooner or later destroy the system, not only economically but politically'. If the Soviet bloc regimes continued with the reforms associated with the NEM in Hungary and the Sik programme in Czechoslovakia, the Communist system would break down, 'and the leaderships of the East European countries are quite determined that this shall not happen'. The ruling regimes would therefore reverse the concessions they had

[34] Smith, *East/West Relations*, 14.6.66, N1075/66, **FO371/188500**(PRO).

made in liberalising the command economy and in allowing greater freedom of expression:

> In short, I regard "national communism", "liberal communism", and all the other so-called qualified forms of communism as illusions. How long the sort of stagnation that exists in [Eastern] Europe can in fact endure is hard to say, but my own belief is that the day will come when the whole system will crack and disintegrate, possibly with an explosion, but more probably not. This however will not mean the end of the alignment with the Soviet Union, though it may have a great effect on the Soviet Union itself.[35]

Clutton's conclusion that 'evolution' would be thwarted, and would ultimately lead to revolution, was criticised by his counterpart in Budapest, Alexander Morley, who stated that a Communist collapse 'would be less satisfactory' than evolutionary change as this would 'bring with it tensions and the risk of war'. Morley, Smith, and other Northern Department officials did not consider it inevitable that the regimes would arrest the process of 'evolution'. The head of the Northern Department asserted that he opposed any effort to split the East Europeans from the Soviets because 'it would not work, not that it would be wrong if it did work', and he questioned Clutton's argument that the alternative to Soviet domination over Eastern Europe was hegemony exercised by a united Germany. Smith admitted that Poland had failed to reform itself since 1956, but did not accept the conclusion that 'either her example or the logic of the situation should lead us to assume that Czechoslovakia, say, is going to fail in the same way'. Authoritarian regimes 'have been known to modify themselves in the face of life itself', and Smith cited Yugoslavia as an example. He concluded that the established view of 'evolution' in Eastern Europe offered the best hope of

[35] G. Clutton to Smith, 7.6.66, N1152/56 & 21.6.66, N1152/63, **FO371/188510**(PRO).

preserving peace between the USSR and the West, which would be jeopardised by the sudden 'cracking and disintegration' of the Communist system.[36]

The debate which followed the ambassador's conference also highlighted an ambivalence in the official British view of reform in Eastern Europe. The Soviet military presence in the GDR, Poland and Hungary was a potential threat to West European security, but Soviet garrisons also ensured stability and order in a region which, as far as the Foreign Office was concerned, had been an epicentre of nationalist rivalry and political instability before the Second World War. A preference for stability over self-determination was a long-established feature of British foreign policy. Events in Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1980-1981 and throughout Eastern Europe in 1989 justified Clutton's scepticism about the possibility for 'evolution', but it appears that in the mid-1960s his colleagues were unwilling to contemplate the implications if the Communist regimes simply refused to 'evolve'.

The Wilson government, the offsets crisis and the East-West military balance: July 1966-April 1967

The problem caused by the foreign exchange costs incurred by American and British forces based in West Germany has been described elsewhere, and the convoluted history of the three-way dispute between Washington, London and

[36] Smith to Clutton, N1152/60; P. Rhodes' comments on Clutton's letter, N1152/62; & A. Morley to Smith, 6.7.66, N1152/63, **FO371/188510**(PRO).

Bonn over offsets requires a thesis in itself. The trilateral negotiations from the autumn of 1966 to the end of April 1967 resulted from an American attempt to resolve the impasse between the British and West German governments, arising from London's demand in July 1966 that Bonn should offset all of BAOR's costs, or accept the withdrawal of troops to the UK.[37] The financial crisis that month reinforced Wilson's conviction - shared by Callaghan and Healey, among other Ministers - that Britain was carrying a disproportionate share of the Western defence burden, which included overseas commitments which were deemed to serve allied interests as a whole.[38] Although the fortuitous conclusion of the 'confrontation' with Indonesia (August 1966) permitted the reduction of British forces in the Far East, the UK still had the problem of balancing its NATO and East of Suez commitments.[39] The Wilson government claimed that Britain was 'subsidising' West Germany's defence at an estimated cost of £90 million, but Bonn maintained that BAOR contributed to the collective defence of NATO as a whole. The FRG could not afford to cover the foreign exchange costs of both American and British forces and, as Roberts noted, the West Germans were unwilling to pay BAOR's costs if, as they suspected, London planned to cut British forces in Germany in any case.[40] The offsets crisis had financial roots, but had serious implications for NATO unity and the East-West military balance.

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[37] See H. Zimmerman, 'The Sour Fruits of Victory: Sterling and Security in Anglo-German Relations during the 1950s and 1960s', in *Contemporary European History*, 9/2 (2000), pp.225-234. CC38(66)38th conclusions, 20.7.66, **CAB128/41**(PRO).

[38] MISC17/1st-4th meetings, 21-22.11.64, **CAB130/213**(PRO). Conversation between PM and Rusk at 10 Downing Street, 14.5.65, *FRUS XII. Western Europe*, (Washington 2001), pp.488-489.

[39] P. Catteral (ed.), 'Witness Seminar: The East of Suez Decision', in *Contemporary Record*, 7/3 (1993), pp.619-620, p.622.

[40] Wright to PM, 7.3.66; & Wright to MacLehose, 9.3.66, **PREM13/902**(PRO). Conversation between FRG ambassador & PM at No.10, 1.8.66; & Bonn to FO, No.1153, 7.8.66, **CAB164/88**(PRO).

At the end of August, Johnson cajoled Wilson into agreeing to trilateral negotiations to resolve the dispute, arguing that if the British acted on their threat to reduce BAOR the result would be 'a chain-reaction of troop reductions' which would end with the unravelling of NATO. The President asserted that it would be 'foolish to run down our assets *vis a vis* Moscow without some *quid pro quo*', but the Americans contributed to the crisis over troop levels by withdrawing 40,000 servicemen from West Germany to serve in Vietnam.[41] While Johnson administration officials complained of the unwillingness of their European allies to contribute more to their defence, there was considerable support within Congress for Senator Mike Mansfield's call for a reduction of the US military presence in Europe.[42] McNamara concluded that improvements in air transportation permitted the timely transfer of US reinforcements across the Atlantic in a crisis, and the Pentagon planned for the 'rotational' deployment of American forces in Germany, with some army and air force units being based in the USA. In London, those who favoured the 'redeployment' of British troops argued that McNamara's conclusions were more applicable to UK-based forces, which were geographically closer to NATO's front-line. Although Rusk was more concerned than McNamara with the strategic implications of force reductions, it should be noted that neither he nor the Secretary for Defense made matters easier for the Wilson government

[41] Johnson to PM, CAP66583, 28.8.66, **CAB164/89**(PRO). Smith, *Vietnam War, III*, p.275. Bonn to State Dept, No.325, 3.8.66, **MF406**. Bluth, 'Reconciling the Irreconcilable', pp.97-98.
[42] NSC566th meeting, 13.12.66, IV, 48, **NSF**, NSC meetings 1-2, LBJLIB. P. Williams, *The Senate and US Troops in Europe*, (Macmillan 1985), pp.139-148.

by implying that the UK's commitments East of Suez were more important than the British troop presence in Germany.[43]

Wilson approached the offsets issue in the context of Britain's economic problems, and his visits to Moscow in February and July gave him the impression that the Soviets were likely to agree to informal NATO and WTO force reductions.[44] However, Kosygin only said that mutual troop cuts 'seemed to open an interesting avenue for discussion' on 22 February, and he was hardly more effusive during Wilson's second visit (July 1966).[45] The Prime Minister also neglected the strategic implications on British policy on offsets. Gore-Booth informed Trend that 'our forces in Germany are not a commitment to the defence of [West] Germany alone but represent a contribution to the security of the NATO area, including indeed this country'. The military rationale for redeploying units from BAOR was also questioned. Anticipating France's withdrawal in advance, the service chiefs had observed in August 1965 that if other Western powers reduced their force contributions, 'the combined effect would be most damaging, since the determination of NATO to resist aggression would then be in doubt'.[46] The following summer the COS expressed their concerns over the implications of any unilateral reduction of BAOR, particularly as this could

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[43] OPD(O)(66)19th meeting, 3.8.66, **CAB148/68**(PRO). Conversation between Rusk & Stewart at Bruce's residence, London, 2.6.66, **PREM13/902**(PRO). See also Crossman, I, 11.12.64, p.95.
[44] CC39(66)39th conclusions, 21.7.66, **CAB128/41**(PRO). Conversation between E. Rostow (US Assistant Secretary of State for Political Affairs) & PM at No.10, 21.11.66, **PREM13/808**(PRO).
[45] Kosygin & PM, 22.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO). Kosygin & PM at Kremlin & UK Embassy, 18.7.66, **CAB164/2**(PRO).
[46] Reilly to Stewart, 18.3.65, **PREM13/324**(PRO). Gore-Booth to Trend, 21.5.66, **CAB164/88**(PRO). COS/65(148), *France and NATO*, 17.8.65, **DEFE5/161**(PRO).

encourage further American troops cuts.[47] However, by November the chiefs acquiesced in the Wilson government's determination to recover BAOR's foreign exchange costs. Despite his initial concerns over troop reductions, by the autumn of 1966 Healey saw the trilateral talks as a means of persuading the USA and FRG - and through them the rest of NATO - that the Alliance could afford to reduce its force levels.[48]

The Labour government's approach to the offsets negotiations was based upon the assessment, prepared by the JIC and reflecting the Defence Secretary's views, that the USSR would not risk a nuclear holocaust, and that there had been no change to Soviet military doctrine since the Mottershead report's assessment five years previously. JIC analysts observed that in spite of the Vietnam war Moscow had maintained a 'limited political dialogue' with the Western powers, and had resisted Chinese pressure to counteract US intervention in South-East Asia by raising tensions over Berlin. The JIC ruled out a surprise (or 'standing start') WTO attack, concluding that NATO would receive 'several weeks' notice if the USSR adopted a more hostile and aggressive attitude towards the West. Having received this advance 'political warning', NATO would also have four to nine days 'military warning' of any Warsaw Pact attack. The period of 'political warning' would therefore enable the USA and UK to send reinforcements to bolster NATO's defences as East-West relations deteriorated. The JIC's assessment theoretically supported a reduction in BAOR, subject to the agreement of NATO

[47] COS34th/66, 17.7.66, **DEFE4/202**(PRO). COS48th/66, 8.9.66, **DEFE4/205**(PRO).
[48] COS60th/66, 8.11.66, **DEFE4/208**(PRO).

allies.[49] However, the Commander-in-Chief of BAOR warned that Western intelligence services could fail to detect indicators of Soviet bloc aggression (for example, troop movements from the Western USSR to the GDR) if these appeared to be part of routine military exercises.[50] Percy Cradock, a Foreign Office analyst who later became chairman of the JIC, retrospectively described the concept of 'political warning' as 'nebulous and controversial', dependant on a subjective estimate of Soviet intentions. 'Political warning' provided the justification for Washington and London to 'redeploy' troops from Germany, but it did not allow for the possibility that in any international crisis NATO governments might be unwilling to exacerbate East-West tensions by ordering a higher state of military readiness.[51] Furthermore, even if the Soviets responded to NATO force reductions by cutting their garrisons in Eastern Europe, troops located in the Western USSR were still geographically closer to NATO's Central front than US forces redeployed across the Atlantic or British units based across the English Channel.

On the offsets issue, both the USA and UK acted as though they had the right to 'redeploy' troops from Germany without other NATO members taking the same course of action. However, in 1967 Canada, Belgium and the FRG sought to cut their force contributions to the Alliance, at a time when the Soviets were building up their conventional military power, and while the East European armed forces were being upgraded with more sophisticated weaponry. The JIC's

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[49] JIC(66)57, *Tripartite Talks. Soviet Intentions and Warning of Soviet Attack in Europe*, 4.11.66, **CAB158/64**(PRO).
[50] General J. Hackett (BAOR) to General J. Cassels (Chief of the General Staff), 21.12.66, **DEFE13/635**(PRO).
[51] Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.255. Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.179-181.

assessments contained the caveat that the Soviets might abandon their 'cautious' approach towards the Western powers if NATO was significantly weakened, or if the USA's commitment to defend Western Europe appeared open to question. The Wilson government overlooked the possibility that other allied powers would use their arguments to reduce their troop commitments, thus leading to the disintegration of the Alliance which Johnson had warned the Prime Minister of in late August.[52]

The British were not solely responsible for the disarray within NATO which compounded France's actions in March 1966 - the Johnson administration contributed to the Alliance's problems by transferring troops from Germany to Vietnam, and by placing its own demands on Bonn for offsets. Yet Wilson appeared to take at face value Kosygin's equivocal comments on mutual force reductions, and the British acted on the assumption that Soviet intentions would continue to remain passive. Wilson also failed to register the implications of the Soviet Premier's assertion that *détente* depended on a reduced American military presence in Western Europe.[53] British defence policy, as noted above, considered the US commitment to Western Europe's defence to be crucial to NATO unity. Conversely, significant reductions of American forces in West Germany would have a dire impact on the Alliance's cohesion (and would give de Gaulle more reason to argue that the USA could not be trusted to defend Europe). While we

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[52] NIE11-4-66, *Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy*, 11.6.66; & NIE11-14-66, *Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces*, 3.11.66, **RG263**, 190, 28, 16-17, NARAII. JIC(67)1, *Periodic Intelligence summary for NATO Commands*, **CAB158/65**(PRO). JIC(66)57, **CAB158/64**(PRO).
[53] Kosygin & PM at the Kremlin, 22.2.66, **PREM13/805**(PRO).

have scant primary evidence on Moscow's perceptions of NATO's problems at this time, the Soviets would presumably have been happy to see the Alliance dissolve under the weight of its 'contradictions'. Dobrynin retrospectively confirmed that Moscow opposed mutual force reductions, as this could jeopardise its authority over Eastern Europe.[54] This attitude was subsequently shown by the USSR's rejection of NATO's Reykjavik declaration (June 1968), and the lack of progress in the NATO-WTO Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[55]

Conclusions:

British policy towards BAOR's foreign exchange costs changed course as a consequence of the application for EEC membership and the conclusions of the 1967 defence review. Yet throughout 1966 there was a clear contradiction between Wilson's expressed intention of rallying NATO after France's withdrawal, and his government's determination to force Bonn to pay for BAOR's foreign exchange costs. At the Chequers conference, Wilson and his Ministers had concluded that NATO's force levels could be significantly reduced, but following the July 1966 financial crisis the case for reducing the British commitment to NATO became confused with the need to cut defence expenditure. By threatening to reduce BAOR if its foreign exchange costs were not completely offset, the Labour

[54] Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p.146, p.169.
[55] Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp.533-537.

government contributed to the crisis which threatened NATO's survival. Wilson had, in his own words to Rusk, argued that 'if everybody in the alliance acted like de Gaulle ... a truly dangerous situation would be created in Europe', but the actions of his government over offsets were hardly likely to help 'preserve a solidarity of purpose' to keep NATO going after France's withdrawal.[56]

The Prime Minister had informed Stewart in March 1966 that it was still in Britain's interest to keep the USA committed to Western Europe's defence, but he and his Ministers overlooked the fact that any cuts to BAOR would encourage the Americans towards further reductions in their military presence in West Germany.[57] As noted above, Washington did not help the cause of NATO unity by withdrawing troops and equipment from Germany to Vietnam - which Johnson overlooked when he warned Wilson of the danger that the Alliance might 'unravel' - and by insisting that Bonn offset the foreign exchange costs of US forces in Germany.[58] In this respect, the Americans had the advantage because their military presence was far larger and more significant than that of the British, thereby giving Washington greater leverage than London in negotiations over offsets with West Germany. The Prime Minister neglected this factor, and as noted above he also placed far too much emphasis on Kosygin's equivocal comments on mutual troop cuts.

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[513] PM & Rusk, 10.6.66, **PREM13/2264**(PRO).
[57] PM to Stewart, 15.3.66, **CAB164/28**(PRO). S. Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?*, (unpublished manuscript, to be published by Palgrave, 2002), Chapter 8.
[58] Nuti, *Transatlantic relations*, pp.17-18.

The offsets crisis reflected the problems inherent in the Labour government's intention to maintain both the NATO and East of Suez roles with overstretched forces and a weak financial basis. The crisis also took a higher priority in British foreign policy than the promotion of *détente* - a priority demonstrated by the limited discussion within the Cabinet and OPD on the 'declaration of principles'. Regarding the future of Eastern Europe, the Foreign Office's discussions on 'evolution' - which was the principal topic at the biannual conference of ambassadors to the Eastern bloc states (April 1966) - had little impact on Ministerial thinking. The Wilson government did little to back up its rhetoric of rallying NATO behind the promotion of *détente*, and as a consequence it was the Belgian government which played the principal role in co-ordinating the Alliance's approach to East-West diplomacy in 1967.[59]

The ambassador's conference reflected the consensus within the Foreign Office that the process of 'evolution' in Eastern Europe was irreversible, and that by adopting less ideological internal policies the regimes would be able to manage reform, without provoking either popular demands for greater change or Soviet intervention. The ambassador to Warsaw, however, called into question the assumption that Communist regimes would 'modify themselves', and concluded that even 'national Communism' would lead to stagnation and collapse. Ever since the drafting of PUSC(51)16 the Foreign Office had shown concern at the implications of violent upheaval in Eastern Europe. This explains the hope expressed by Northern Department officials that the process of 'evolution' could be managed by

[59] COS48th/66, 8.9.66, **DEFE4/205**(PRO). *Conference of Ambassadors from Eastern Europe*, **FO371/188510**(PRO).

ruling regimes pragmatic enough to ease popular grievances caused by economic austerity and the authoritarian political and social order. British diplomats underestimated the degree to which the Communist regimes could enforce social conformity without the overt use of police terror. The *nomenklatura* system in the USSR and each Eastern bloc state made ideological orthodoxy a prerequisite for advancement not only within the ruling parties, but throughout 'socialist' society - in industrial management, the armed forces, academia and local government. The *nomenklatura* system thereby inhibited the emergence of a more independent-minded technocratic class that would promote liberalisation. In this respect, Smith's reference to Czechoslovakia's efforts at internal reform was particularly ironic because Sik's plans for the command economy were effectively stifled by the ruling regime during 1967.[60] Above all, the concept of 'evolution' also presumed that the Soviets would tolerate such a process of reform. However, Moscow's response to the 'Prague Spring' two years later called this assessment into question.

[60] Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.248-249. Davies, *Heart of Europe*, pp.47-48. H. Renner, *A History of Czechoslovakia since 1945*, (Routledge 1989), pp.37-38.

CHAPTER 5: KOSYGIN'S VISIT TO BRITAIN AND ITS IMPACT ON ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS. FEBRUARY-DECEMBER 1967.

At face value, Kosygin's visit to Britain was a cordial one, with the Soviet Premier gaining a public relations success with the warm reception he received. Although still critical of the USSR's treatment of Brooke, press reports on the visit portrayed Kosygin as being personally committed to East-West *détente*.[1] Gore-Booth was nonetheless annoyed that the Soviet Premier used his speech at the Guildhall on 8 February to engage in a standard propaganda diatribe against both West German 'militarism' and American policy in South-East Asia.[2] Two months previously, the Foreign Office had suggested that an informal request be made to Kosygin to avoid public attacks on Britain's allies during his trip, but Wilson and Brown rejected this suggestion. Crossman, hardly the most right-wing of Wilson's Ministers, expressed astonishment that many Labour MPs approved of Kosygin's attack on British policy towards Vietnam during his visit to the House of Commons (9 February). Wilson, however, made no complaint about the Soviet Premier's conduct and, according to Castle, 'rhapsodised about the [close relationship] he had built up' with his guest.[3]

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[1] See, for example, 'He who never smiles, smiles' in *The Express*, 9.2.67; & 'It's a Really British Welcome' in *The Mirror*, 7.2.67 on Kosygin's public appearances. Also 'The Surprising Mr Kosygin' in *The Sun*, 3.2.67, & 'Why Mr Kosygin's Visit to Britain is Important' in *The Times*, 6.2.67.

[2] See 'Kosygin alarm on Germany', in *The Times*, 9.2.67. FO/CRO to Missions, No.20, 14.2.67, **FCO28/389**(PRO). Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth*, p.358.

[3] M. Fenn (FO) to Palliser, 13.12.66; & Palliser to Fenn, 23.12.66, **PREM13/1221**(PRO). Crossman, *Diaries, II*, 9.2.67, p.231. Castle, *Diaries*, 14.2.67, p.220.

As noted above, Wilson wanted to invite Kosygin to the UK in early 1965, and having finally achieved this aim he hoped that the visit would produce practical results. Kosygin's discussions with the Prime Minister, Brown and other Ministers covered the established topics of disarmament, European security and bilateral trade, but he main feature of his visit was an abortive peace-making initiative on Vietnam, given the code-name *Sunflower* by American officials. Following Kosygin's visit Wilson expected that bilateral trade and technological co-operation would be formalised by an Anglo-Soviet 'treaty of friendship'. In this respect, the Prime Minister was yet again competing with de Gaulle in establishing closer relations with the USSR. However, during the spring and summer of 1967 British efforts to negotiate a 'treaty of friendship' were stalled by Moscow. The condition of Anglo-Soviet relations paralleled the generally poor state of East-West relations at this time, as shown by the Warsaw Pact's diplomatic onslaught against West German *Ostpolitik*, and the clash of superpower interests not only in Vietnam but in the Middle East. This chapter discusses the circumstances in which the Soviet Premier visited the UK, and then examines the course of Kosygin's trip, concluding with an analysis of the course of Anglo-Soviet political relations from February 1967 to Wilson's third visit to Moscow in January 1968.

Britain as an 'intermediary': Contacts between London and Moscow, July-November 1966.

Wilson was disappointed when Smirnovsky informed him on 18 April 1966 that Kosygin would not visit Britain in the summer, because such a visit would not produce 'concrete results'. The Prime Minister ignored this implied slight, and suggested that he could travel to Moscow, ostensibly to attend the British Trade Fair (16-18 July). Kosygin agreed and arranged to meet him in the Kremlin on the 18th.[4] Wilson travelled to the USSR in mid-July despite the seamen's strike and the ensuing financial crisis, both of which damaged his domestic reputation. Despite intense press criticism and a suspected conspiracy led by Brown to unseat him, Wilson refused to cancel his trip.[5] State Department officials concluded that his objectives were to appeal to public sentiment which (despite the Brooke case) generally supported *détente*, and to gain 'the aura and glamor of *confidante* and go-between between East and West' which de Gaulle acquired during his own visit to Moscow in June.[6] The Prime Minister presumably hoped that the visit would enable him to establish his credentials as a statesman, and he was jealous of the French President's apparent successes in promoting Franco-Soviet concord. However, Wilson also intended to have 'frank and private' discussions with Kosygin on Vietnam.[7]

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[4] Conversation between PM & Smirnovsky at 10 Downing St, 18.4.66, NS1052/23, **FO371/188929**(PRO). Smith to Palliser, 29.6.66, NS1051/165; Palliser to M. MacLehose (FO), 4.7.66, NS0151/173/G, **FO371/188923**(PRO).
[5] See Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.419-427, on the July financial crisis and the alleged Cabinet 'plot'. For media criticisms of the Moscow visit and Wilson's handling of the UK's financial problems, see 'Wrong Place ... Wrong Time' in *The Express*, 18.7.66; & 'Sunshine, Moonshine, Lightning, Thunder' in *The Mirror*, 15.7.66.
[6] Hughes to Rusk, *Harold Wilson's Latest Journey to Moscow*, 15.7.66, **MF409**.
[7] Castle sheds light on Wilson's envy of de Gaulle in *Diaries*, 22.6.67, p. 270. FO to Moscow, No.1622, 4.7.66, NS1051/174, **FO371/188923**(PRO). FO/CRO to Missions, N213 Guidance, 8.7.66, NS1051/176, **FO371/188924**(PRO).

At the beginning of June 1966 the Johnson administration decided to bomb targets in Hanoi and Haiphong, both of which were North of the 19th parallel. Having acquiesced in US air attacks on targets to the South of this line of latitude, Wilson dissociated Britain from the Hanoi and Haiphong raids, much to Johnson's fury. The Prime Minister was concerned by both the extension of *Rolling Thunder* and the North Vietnamese threat to try captured US pilots for war crimes. Wilson informed Johnson that he would warn Kosygin that any maltreatment of American prisoners would have an inflammatory effect on US domestic opinion. The former concluded that the Soviets were 'thoroughly worried' by 'the real danger that excessive Chinese intransigence could drag them into a confrontation with yourselves'.[8] Wilson repeated this theme in a conversation with Kosygin shortly after his arrival in Moscow on 16 July. The Prime Minister asked his host whether he was concerned that 'China and the United States might get into an "eyeball to eyeball" confrontation over Vietnam', which could embroil the USSR against its will. The Soviet premier gloomily responded that 'he had no confidence in China to show restraint if the war continued to escalate'.[9]

During subsequent meetings in the Kremlin and the British embassy two days later, Kosygin was less forthcoming. Wilson asserted that the situation in Vietnam had 'taken a more serious turn' since his last visit to the USSR. The co-chairmen had to address the problem of how to stop the war, thereby removing

[8] Johnson to PM, 14.6.66, *FRUS IV. Vietnam 1966*, (Washington 1998), pp.426-428. FO to Washington, No.6947, 15.7.66, NS1051/225, **FO371/188924**(PRO).
[9] Note for the record, 16.7.66, **CAB164/2**(PRO).

'the danger of escalation, which could happen rapidly and outside the control of either Britain or the Soviet Union'. The Prime Minister admitted that the South Vietnamese government was 'not his favourite regime', but the North Vietnamese had by repeatedly rejecting peace proposal shown themselves to be 'dangerously isolated from the outside world'. Both the UK and USSR were 'realists', and as 'cool-headed and practical nations' both could influence the combatants to settle their differences at the conference table. However, Kosygin berated Wilson over Britain's support for American 'banditry' in Vietnam, and he maintained that the USSR could not undertake any diplomatic initiatives without North Vietnamese consent. He was also dismissive of Wilson's response to the Hanoi and Haiphong raids, and pressed the Prime Minister to dissociate the UK completely from American actions in Vietnam. In response, the Prime Minister reiterated his argument that total dissociation would undermined British efforts to influence US policy in South-East Asia.[10]

Wilson admitted to Johnson that he had again returned from Moscow with not much to show from his endeavours, but he was impressed by Kosygin's apparent candour over Chinese intentions and the risks of a major confrontation in South-East Asia. The Prime Minister asserted that he was 'more convinced' that the 'unsensational relationship that is growing up between Kosygin and myself has real - if still largely potential - value'. Wilson also retrospectively claimed the credit when Hanoi opted not to put American prisoners-of-war on trial, a claim subsequently challenged by Rodric Braithwaite, the Commercial Secretary at the

[10] Conversations between Kosygin & PM at Kremlin (am) & at UK Embassy (pm), 18.7.66, **CAB164/2**(PRO).

Moscow embassy who acted as the Prime Minister's interpreter in his conversations with Kosygin. Braithwaite recalled that when Wilson tried to discuss the prisoners issue with the Soviet Premier, the latter simply responded that Moscow had no influence over Hanoi. This bland exchange did not prevent Wilson from making extravagant claims in Cabinet on the significance of his visit, as shown by Castle's diary entry for the 21 July:

> Kosygin had talked privately to him in 'a quite fantastic way'. No other Western leader had ever been given such an insight into Russian thinking. Kosygin had confided in him about all his problems. There was nothing he would like more, Harold was sure, than to reconvene the Geneva conference, but he couldn't. [Kosygin was very] afraid of escalation and bitterly critical of the Americans. He believed that Kosygin was anxious for him to carry a message back to Johnson. Kosygin made it clear that he regarded Britain as a valuable go-between. 'If there were another Cuba situation, they would want our services'.[11]

Wilson blatantly embellished his account of his conversations with the Soviet Premier - the transcripts of his conversations with Kosygin do not support his claim that the USSR would seek British mediation in any crisis as severe as that over Cuba. He also overlooked the fact that, unlike de Gaulle, he did not meet Brezhnev, who was emerging as the 'top man' within the *Politburo*. The French President's meeting with the CPSU Secretary, though principally symbolic, was intended by Moscow to show approval of de Gaulle's policies towards NATO and Vietnam.[12] Wilson's statement that the Soviets would 'use the United Kingdom as an intermediary in any discussions with the United States' was also contradicted by Harrison, who informed his American counterpart that Kosygin did not consider the Prime Minister to be an interlocutor between himself and Johnson.

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[11] Wilson, *Labour Government*, p.275. FO to Washington, No.7075, 19.7.66, **PREM13/1218**(PRO). Braithwaite, p.3, **DOHP**. Castle, *Diaries*, 21.7.66, p.151.

[12] On de Gaulle's visit to Moscow, see A. Shennan, *De Gaulle*, (Longman 1993), p.121; & Narinski, 'Les Sovietiques', in Bozo, Mélandri & Vaïsse, *France et l'OTAN*, p.506. Smith, *Secretary of State's Visit to Moscow*, Briefs 2(a) & 2(b), NS1051/283, **FO371/188927**(PRO).

Furthermore, Wilson had got no further in committing Kosygin to a fixed date for his visit to the UK.[13] The Prime Minister assumed that this was due to his concerns for his position in the *Politburo*. Kosygin was rumoured to have threatened resignation because of the slow progress of his economic reforms, but while Brezhnev consolidated his authority throughout the autumn of 1966, British diplomats saw no reason to conclude that Kosygin's position in the *Politburo* had declined. Harrison concluded that the Soviet Premier would only visit Britain 'when he and his colleagues feel that something can be got out of it'. In the meantime, the non-aligned countries and France would 'have a higher priority in the Soviet leaders' minds'.[14]

By the autumn of 1966, Wilson's opinions on Britain's role as an 'intermediary' linking the two superpowers had been taken up by the new Foreign Secretary, George Brown. Brown had exchanged portfolios with Stewart in a Cabinet reshuffle in August, and while his predecessor had been the proverbial 'safe pair of hands', the new Foreign Secretary was a far more dynamic and pro-active figure. Unfortunately, Brown was inclined to behave erratically after a few drinks. Furthermore, he had stood for the Labour leadership against Wilson in 1963, and the relationship between the two was blighted by mutual animosity.[15] Nonetheless, Brown shared Wilson's interest in East-West *détente*, and his first meeting with Gromyko at the UN General Assembly in October 1966 was far

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[13] PMV(2)(66)6, *Prime Minister's Visit to Moscow. July, 1966. General Brief*, 13.7.66, **CAB133/346**(PRO). CC39(66)39th conclusions, 21.7.66, **CAB128/41**(PRO). Moscow to State Dept, No.300, 20.7.66, **NSF**, USSRCF200, LBJLIB.

[14] MacLehose to Palliser, 3.10.66, NS1051/228; Moscow to FO, No.1836, 10.10.66, NS1051/230, **FO371/188925**(PRO).

[15] Interview with Donald Maitland, p.12; & Interview with Palliser, p.14, **DOHP**.

more cordial than earlier encounters between the latter and Stewart. In informal discussions with Rusk the Soviet foreign minister had reversed Soviet opposition to a consultative solution to the NATO nuclear-sharing issue.[16] When Brown told Gromyko that Britain supported McNamara's proposal for a 'special committee' within the Alliance, the latter responded that this was acceptable provided there was no explicit allowance for consultative arrangements in any NPT. Over the course of the following two years of NPT negotiations, the Americans discovered that it was far easier to reach agreement with the Soviets than it was to overcome West European - notably German and Italian - and neutral criticisms that the NPT discriminated against non-nuclear powers.[17]

At the end of the month, Kosygin informed Harrison that he was now prepared to visit the UK in January or February 1967.[18] In the ambassador's opinion, Kosygin's forthcoming visit and the change in Soviet policy towards non-proliferation were significant. Brown was informed by Harrison the day before his scheduled visit to Moscow (22-25 November 1966) that since Khrushchev's fall Soviet efforts to establish *détente* with the West had been thwarted by their rivalry with China. Yet Chinese prestige within the Communist world had deteriorated as a result of the 'Cultural Revolution', and Moscow had a freer hand in pursuing its foreign policy goals. Harrison asserted that Vietnam was still a barrier to improved East-West relations, and he acknowledged that the Soviets still

[16] Conversation between Brown & Rusk at State Department, 14.10.66, **PREM13/2440**(PRO).
[17] Conversation between Brown & Gromyko in New York, 8.10.66 & 10.10.66, NS1052/39, **FO371/188930**(PRO). Nuti, *Transatlantic relations*, pp.21-24.
[18] Moscow to FO, No.1958, 29.10.66, NS1052/45, **FO371/188930**.

sought to exploit divisions between the Western powers, hence its approaches towards France. Nonetheless, Moscow had an overwhelming interest in reducing tensions with the USA in particular, and in this respect Britain had a role to play as the 'voice of reason' within the West. Like Wilson, Harrison maintained that while de Gaulle's influence was limited to 'propaganda haymaking', Britain could promote progress on *détente* through its dealings with the USSR. The head of the Northern Department expressed his scepticism, telling Harrison that 'it is hard to decide whether there is genuine movement or merely a Soviet intention to give the appearance of [progress]', and he suggested that Moscow's more forthcoming attitude was intended to split Britain from its allies. The ambassador to Moscow, by contrast, was far more convinced than he had been the previous year that the Soviets were serious in seeking to improve relations with the Western powers.[19]

Harrison was not alone in concluding that Soviet policy had changed during in the autumn of 1966. US officials presumed that Moscow's more forthcoming attitude towards non-proliferation negotiations - as expressed by Gromyko during his visit to the USA in October 1966 - was due to Soviet concerns over China's development of nuclear weapons. The Johnson administration also concluded that the Soviet leadership had become more alarmed at the prospects of a wider war in Vietnam, and more prepared to encourage Hanoi towards a negotiated settlement.[20] The Foreign Office's assessment of the reasons

[19] Harrison to Brown, 21.11.66; & Smith to Harrison, 18.12.66, NS1022/69, **FO371/188906**(PRO).
[20] G. Chang, *Friends and Enemies. The United States, China and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, (Stanford University Press 1990), p.275. Conversation between Brown, Bruce, Patrick Dean (UK Ambassador), Johnson & US officials at White House, 14.10.66; & Moscow to State Dept, n.d. & 28.11.66, *FRUS XIV*, p.427, pp.434-441.

behind Kosygin's forthcoming visit to Britain concurred with the ambassador to Moscow's view that the USSR's policies towards the Western world showed 'new signs of life'. While the Soviets still hoped to encourage intra-Western differences, the USSR and the East European states had an incentive to develop commercial and technological contacts with Western countries. In this respect, Kosygin's aims in visiting the UK included that of '[exploiting] the goodwill which exists in this country toward the Soviet Union and to encourage, perhaps indirectly, anti-American feeling', but he also wanted to achieve a 'concrete' result from his trip, possibly in the form of an agreement on technological co-operation similar to that he had concluded earlier with the French.[21]

Brown evidently shared Harrison's view of Britain as the 'voice of reason' with the ability to influence Soviet policy towards *détente*. Bruce informed Washington that the Foreign Secretary had no doubts that his invitation to Moscow and the Soviet Premier's agreement to visit the UK demonstrated the 'Soviet desire to do business' with Britain. The US ambassador to London stated that the Foreign Secretary now considered that Kosygin was 'sufficiently persuaded' of the prospects for both improved East-West relations and a settlement to the Vietnam war that the 'British can have critical influence on [the] Russians in the next few months'. Brown's efforts to discuss Vietnam and arms control during his visit proved fruitless, but Bruce observed that the Foreign Secretary felt that he had strengthened his 'already sympathetic relationship with Gromyko' and had established friendly relations with Kosygin. Although Brown

[21] KV(67)1, *Steering Brief*, 26.1.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO).

returned to London 'with no definite accomplishment' this did not 'disturb his ever ready optimism'.[22] However, the outcome of the *Sunflower* peace initiative strained both the Foreign Secretary's optimism and the Wilson government's relationship with the Johnson administration.

Sunflower is planted: British diplomacy and the Vietnam war, June 1966-January 1967.

Wilson was not alone in seeking a diplomatic solution to the Vietnam war. Among the other third-party initiatives was *Marigold*, which developed from contacts between the US ambassador to Saigon and the Polish ICC representative, Janusz Lewandowski. Lewandowski's activities in Saigon in the summer of 1966 led to discussions in December between the US ambassador to Warsaw, John Gronouski, and the Polish Foreign Minister. Concurrently with these contacts the State Department established the 'Phase A / Phase B' formula for military disengagement in Vietnam, in which the USA would halt air attacks on the DRV, prior to the cessation of both NVA infiltration and US reinforcements to the South. Gronouski was due to meet a North Vietnamese envoy in Warsaw when US air-raids on Hanoi on 15 December led the DRV to demand an end to the *Marigold* negotiations. The initiative collapsed with mutual accusations of bad faith, but provided the background for *Sunflower*, which involved two separate contacts - the first involving the US Embassy in Moscow's approach to North

[22] London to State Dept, No.3814, 7.11.66; & No.4377, 27.11.66, **RG59**, 250, 5-7, 2788, NARAII.

Vietnamese diplomats (January 1967), and the second being Wilson's discussions with Kosygin the following month.[23]

Despite *Marigold* and *Sunflower*, Johnson and many of his officials became convinced during the course of 1966 that a negotiated settlement to the war was neither feasible or desirable. The administration's more intransigent attitude was symbolised by Ball's resignation as Under-Secretary of State and McGeorge Bundy's replacement by Walt Rostow. Both Johnson's new national security advisor and the JCS were convinced that the war in South Vietnam could be won, and that *Rolling Thunder* was crippling the DRV's war effort. The 'hawks' favoured more, not less, military action against the DRV, and Rostow compared Wilson's 'dissociation' from the Hanoi and Haiphong raids to Macmillan's response to the Berlin crisis, commenting with evident disgust that 'we are up against a [British] attitude which, in effect, prefers that we take losses in the free world rather than the risks of sharp confrontation'.[24]

Brown took a more active interest in negotiations on Vietnam than his predecessor, and he hoped to use his visit to Moscow (November 1966) to persuade the Soviets to co-operate with British attempts to mediate. The Foreign Secretary blamed North Vietnam for the conflict, but as Palliser recalled, Brown

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[23] See J. Hershberg, *"Who Murdered Marigold" ? New Evidence on the Mysterious failure of Poland's Secret Initiative to Start US-North Vietnamese Peace Talks*, CWIHP Working Paper No.27 (2000), & also J. Michalowski, 'Polish Secret Peace Initiatives in Vietnam', *CWIHP Bulletin*, 6/7 (1995-1996), p.241, pp.258-259. Gaiduk, *Soviet Union*, p.96.

[24] A. E. Goodman, *The Search for a Negotiated Settlement of the Vietnam War*, (Berkeley; Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California 1986), p.19. W. Rostow to Johnson, 5.4.66, *FRUS IV*, pp.329-333; & 28.7.66, **MF411**.

was 'more worried about the American role' in Indochina than Stewart had been. According to Castle, the Foreign Secretary once declared himself to be 'sickened' by the extent to which the Labour government had defended American actions in Vietnam.[25] Despite this outburst, Brown sought to persuade Cabinet sceptics in November 1967 that if Britain dissociated itself completely from US policy, Anglo-American relations would be irreparably damaged. Furthermore, if the Vietnam war ended in disaster, the USA would 'follow a sporadic and unpredictable foreign policy, withdrawing here and over-asserting herself there'. The Chinese and Soviets could respond to 'unwise temptations' in response to American inconsistency, with cataclysmic results. Brown argued that although British global influence was declining, the UK still had influence in Washington and with Moscow, and that the British government had 'a duty and a capacity to maintain a continued readiness to act in the cause of peace when asked to do so by one of the combatants'. Although these arguments were advanced nine months after the Kosygin visit, they reflect the mindset of both Wilson and Brown in early 1967.[26]

When Brown visited Washington in October, he was given the Phase A / Phase B formula with no indication of its origins. He was also informed that Washington would not end *Rolling Thunder* without Hanoi giving 'substantial advance information that there was a beginning of a process of de-escalation' on North Vietnam's part. The Americans felt that the mercurial Foreign Secretary had

[25] Palliser, p.12, **DOHP**. Castle, *Diaries*, 18.7.66, p.148.
[26] C(67)180: *Vietnam*, memorandum by Brown, 15.11.67, **CAB129/134**(PRO).

'limitations as an intermediary', but nonetheless acquiesced in Brown's peace-making efforts on the grounds that Anglo-American relations 'would suffer a damaging blow if the British government were to conclude that we were not serious about reaching a negotiated settlement on Vietnam'.[27] In Moscow, Brown appraised Gromyko of the Phase A / Phase B formula, only to receive the standard Soviet response that Moscow was not authorised to discuss Vietnam, and that US air-strikes had to end before negotiations began.[28]

The Foreign Secretary knew nothing of *Marigold*, and when he and Wilson discovered in early January 1967 where the Phase A / Phase B proposal originated both were furious that they had not been consulted in advance. Brown's failure in Moscow was in all probability due to Soviet reluctance to engage in mediation, but both he and the Prime Minister assumed that his ignorance of the *Marigold* discussions had hampered his efforts, as the Soviets would conclude that either the Foreign Secretary 'was not being frank with them, or that, whereas the Poles were fully in the picture, the British government was not'. The Prime Minister told Bruce that Washington had to send an official to London to brief him on American policy on negotiations, as he intended to discuss Vietnam with Kosygin. Wilson expressed his preference for Chester Cooper, an NSC official and former aide to Harriman.[29] The Prime Minister chose to believe that Britain's dissociation from the Hanoi and Haiphong raids would improve the prospects of Anglo-Soviet

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[27] W. Bundy to Rusk, **RG59**, 250, 5-7, 2788, NARAII. Memorandum of meeting at State Department, 10.11.66, *FRUS IV*, pp.820-825.
[28] Conversation between Brown & Gromyko at Soviet Foreign Ministry, 23.11.66,NS1051/290, **FO371/188928**(PRO).
[29] FO to Washington, No.92, 4.1.67; & conversation between Bruce & PM at No.10, 10.1.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO).

mediation, as 'we might now seem slightly less than before to be satellites of the United States'. Brown informed Cabinet in mid-January 1967 that the prospects for a negotiated settlement were 'slightly more hopeful than hitherto', with one possible consequence of the Cultural Revolution being that 'the Chinese Government might be unable to prevent the Soviet Government from adopting a rather more positive attitude towards [ending] the [war] in Vietnam'.[30]

According to Dobrynin, Hanoi wanted Kosygin to encourage the British to put pressure on the Americans withdraw from Vietnam, while the Soviet Premier apparently hoped to achieve a diplomatic success similar to the Tashkent conference (January 1966), in which he brokered a ceasefire settlement concluding the Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir. Gore-Booth believed that the Soviets had an interest in seeing a conclusion to the war in Vietnam, as otherwise the conflict 'might get out of hand in unpredictable ways' - a conclusion corroborated by Dobrynin's memoirs.[31] Kosygin was described as being 'in prompt, confidential communication' with the North Vietnamese, and his telephone conversations with Brezhnev, intercepted by MI5, suggest that the former saw a chance to achieve a ceasefire.[32] Chester Cooper later expressed doubts as to whether the Soviet party was initially prepared to discuss Vietnam. Gromyko did not accompany Kosygin, and the Foreign Ministry staff were all European or trade specialists.[33] Wilson was nonetheless optimistic, and Brown subsequently stated that the former 'wanted so

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[30] Memorandum by Palliser, 10.6.66, **PREM13/1890**(PRO). CC1(67)1st conclusions, 12.1.67, **CAB128/42**(PRO).
[31] Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp.155-157. Gore-Booth to de la Mare, 23.1.67, **FCO15/615**(PRO).
[32] G. Herring (ed.), *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*, (Austin 1983), p.400. Tony Benn confirms that MI5 had Kosygin under surveillance in *Out of the Wilderness*, 6.2.67, p.468.
[33] Chester Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, (London; MacGibbon & Kee 1971), pp.354-355.

badly some form of political triumph over Vietnam' and imagined that 'he had a special ability to negotiate with the Russians' which would enable him to enlist the Soviet premier in his efforts at mediation. Brown's close involvement with the Wilson-Kosygin talks suggests, however, that the Prime Minister's sense of commitment and over-optimism were shared by the Foreign Secretary.[34]

Wilson regarded the forthcoming Tet truce, which coincided with Kosgyin's visit, as an opportunity for a breakthrough. The Prime Minister hoped that his guest would recommend the Phase A / Phase B proposal to the North Vietnamese, and he employed Cooper as his link to Washington to ensure American approval of his efforts.[35] The Phase A / Phase B proposal was only concerned with military de-escalation, which as Johnson informed Wilson was to lead to 'private and direct' discussions between Washington and Hanoi. The President also described American terms for de-escalation using language which later proved controversial:

> [We] are prepared to and plan through established channels to inform Hanoi that *if they will agree to an assured stoppage of infiltration into South Viet Nam, we will stop the bombing of North Viet Nam and stop further augmentation of US forces in South Viet Nam.*[36]

Kosygin arrived in London on 6 February, and Wilson sought his endorsement of Phase A / Phase B. The Prime Minister stated that Washington was in 'a difficult position' on Vietnam, and while many Americans supported East-West *détente*, this attitude contrasted with growing support for 'a stronger prosecution of the

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[34] Brown, *In My Way*, p.137. Herring, *Secret Diplomacy*, pp.430-431.
[35] Conversation between Cooper & Wilson at No.10,16.1.67; Washington to FO,N.321,1.2.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO).
[36] Johnson to Wilson, CAP67038, 6.7.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO). Emphasis added to original. Herring, *Secret Diplomacy*, pp.436-437

conflict' against the DRV. Despite Kosygin's insistence on an unconditional end to *Rolling Thunder*, Wilson was impressed by his guest's anti-Chinese attitude.[37] The Prime Minister assured Johnson that Kosygin was showing 'a great sense of urgency', which in his opinion reflected the USSR's interest in ending the Vietnam war and countering Chinese influence in Hanoi.[38]

On the 7th, Kosygin requested a written copy of the Phase A / Phase B formula, which was discussed at a meeting in his hotel suite on the 9th. Cooper drafted this paper with Bruce, Trend, Palliser and a SEAD official, who all interpreted 'assured stoppage' as involving a bombing halt, followed by an end to NVA infiltration into South Vietnam and American troop reinforcements. Kosygin informed Wilson and Brown that he would refer the formula to Hanoi. The Soviet premier may have considered the Phase A / Phase B formula to be militarily advantageous to the DRV, but both Ilya Gaiduk and James Hershberg argue that Kosygin's conduct reflected a change in Soviet policy in early 1967, and that Moscow was now prepared to use private mediation to avert a US-Soviet confrontation over Vietnam. The British believed they had a breakthrough, as on previous occasions the Soviets had flatly refused to co-operate with any peace initiatives. Such was Brown's optimism that he even proposed to Kosygin that both co-Chairman should reconvene the Geneva conference without the Chinese,

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[37] KV(67)1st meeting at No.10, 6.2.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO). Conversations between Kosygin & PM at No.10, 6.2.67 & 7.2.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO).
[38] Memorandum of conversation between Kosygin & PM at dinner at No.10, 7.2.67, **PREM13/1715**(PRO). PM to Johnson, T22/67, 7.2.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO).

although the Soviet Premier refused to consider this.[39] That afternoon, Cooper assisted in drafting an additional paper on Phase A / Phase B. He forwarded this paper to Washington, and considered the lack of response to indicate approval. The British wanted the Phase A / Phase B formula forwarded to the Soviet Premier before he left for a short tour of Scotland on 10 February. Prior to the Soviet party's departure, Kosygin was assured by Wilson that all Washington required was a private assurance that NVA infiltration would cease if *Rolling Thunder* stopped. The Prime Minister was enthusiastic about his apparent breakthrough, informing Ministers that 'the Russians regarded us as the real mediators over Vietnam'.[40] However, Wilson's attitude changed when the Johnson administration belatedly responded to the Phase A / Phase B formula.

***Sunflower* is uprooted: The failure of 'Phase A / Phase B', February-May 1967.**

Cooper and British officials had interpreted 'assured stoppage' in terms of an end to *Rolling Thunder*, followed by mutual de-escalation on the ground. Having acted on this assumption, Cooper spent the evening of the 10th at the theatre, only to be summoned backstage to receive a telephone call from an enraged Rostow. The NSC official rushed back to the US Embassy to receive a new message from Washington which stated that *Rolling Thunder* would end once the Johnson

[39] Conversation between Kosygin & PM at Claridges, 9.2.67, **PREM13/1715**(PRO). *The Kosygin Visit*, (February 1967), pp.10-12, **FCO15/634**(PRO). Gaiduk, *Soviet Union*, pp.100-101. Hershberg, *Marigold*, pp.81-82.
[40] Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, pp.356-357. *Kosygin Visit*, pp.16-17, **FCO15/634**(PRO). Conversation between Kosygin & PM at No.10, 10.2.67, **PREM13/1715**(PRO). Castle, *Diaries*, 9.2.67, p.217.

administration was 'assured that infiltration from North Vietnam to South Vietnam *has stopped*'. Not only were both he and the ambassador obliged to inform the British of this message, but an amended version of Phase A / Phase B had to be hastily drafted and passed on to Kosygin before he took the train to Edinburgh.[41] Wilson was furious that Washington had changed its conditions. The Prime Minister, who faced a difficult meeting with Kosygin at Chequers on 12 February, bluntly told Johnson that he was in 'a hell of a situation'. Wilson asserted that 'peace looked like being within our grasp', and in an acrimonious meeting with Bruce and Cooper during the evening of the 11th he stated that either the Phase A / Phase B proposal outlined by the latter 'did not reflect American policy or that policy had been changed during the course of the week'. Wilson threatened outright dissociation from American policy, and questioned the sincerity of Washington's commitment to peace negotiations. Brown sharply stated that the Johnson administration had made 'a bloody mess of things'. With the *Sunflower* initiative in tatters, the tensions between the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary also erupted. Cooper recalled that 'Wilson and Brown just went for each other' in front of both himself and Bruce, and that the Foreign Secretary made repeated threats to resign. As Cooper wryly recalled, 'It was a pretty rough night'.[42]

Johnson had no sympathy for Wilson's position, and he argued that North Vietnam had exploited the Tet bombing pause by infiltrating more troops into the

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[41] Transcript, Chester Cooper Oral History Interview III, 7.8.69, LBJLIB, pp.17-19. Rostow to Trend, 10.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO). Emphasis added. *Kosygin Visit*, pp.17-18, **FCO15/634**(PRO).
[42] PM to Johnson, T30/67, 12.2.67. Conversation between Brown, Bruce, Cooper & PM at No.10, 11.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO). Lankford, *Last American Aristocrat*, p.335. Cooper Interview, p.21.

South. He also expressed surprise at the manner in which Cooper and British officials had interpreted the phrase 'assured stoppage'.[43] The dispute between London and Washington was not merely a matter of mixed tenses. While Kosygin was in London, the Johnson administration sent a message to Hanoi for Ho Chi Minh on 8 February, calling for bilateral talks and stating that the President would halt both *Rolling Thunder* and troop reinforcements to South Vietnam *'as soon as [he is] assured that infiltration into South Vietnam by land and sea has stopped'*. The British were furious that they had not been informed of the content of this text.[44] McNamara retrospectively attributed this discrepancy between the Johnson-Ho letter and the Phase A / Phase B text to the administration's failure to co-ordinate its diplomatic approach to the Vietnam war with military strategy, in contrast with the North Vietnamese strategy of 'fighting while negotiating'.[45] In contrast, Cooper concluded that Washington considered the Kosygin visit to be a 'sideshow', and was less concerned with the phrasing of the Phase A / Phase B formula, as agreed by American and British officials in London, than with Johnson's message to Ho. Cooper also suspected that the President and his advisors did not want Wilson to get any credit for a diplomatic breakthrough. The *Pentagon Papers* volume examining diplomatic contacts over Vietnam supports this conclusion, stressing that if Washington remained 'aloof' from the Kosygin-Wilson talks, 'the results could be harmful to the US'.[46] This indicates little confidence in

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[43] Johnson to PM, CAP67043, 12.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO).
[44] Goodman, *Vietnam War*, pp.26-27. Palliser to PM, 23.3.67, **PREM13/1919**(PRO).
[45] Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect. The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, (Random House 1995), pp.250-252. Nguyen Vo Tung, 'Coping with the United States: Hanoi's Search for an Effective Strategy', in Lowe (ed.), *Vietnam*, pp.52-56.
[46] Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, pp.355-356, pp.367-368. *Secret Diplomacy*, p.396.

either Wilson's efforts to mediate or the potential for the London talks to achieve a decisive result.

While Kosygin and Wilson met at Chequers on the 12th, Cooper discussed with Trend the possibility of extending the Tet truce, should Hanoi agree to halt NVA movements. He telephoned Washington with this suggestion, and waited for a response while Wilson tried to stall Kosygin's departure to London. Rostow eventually informed Cooper that Washington agreed to this proposal, but Hanoi had to make its response by 10.00am, London time.[47] Wilson tried to persuade Kosygin to accept this proposal early on the morning of the 13th, only for the latter to protest about the limited time he had to get an answer from the North Vietnamese. Wilson and Brown countered by commenting on the NVA build-up during Tet and on Hanoi's lack of response to the original Phase A / Phase B proposal. Wilson told Kosygin that 'peace was more important than victory', and the latter pledged to pass the NVA halt / Tet truce extension proposal to Hanoi, expressing the opinion that it would be rejected by the North Vietnamese.[48] Wilson begged Johnson for an extension of the deadline, and was grudgingly granted six more hours. Bruce tried to request a further extension from Washington, but the ambassador failed to influence Rusk.[49] Hanoi made no response to the proposals Kosygin pledged to pass on, and the Soviet party left Britain on 13 February without a deal being struck.

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[47] *Secret Diplomacy*, pp.471-472. Johnson to PM, CAP67045, 12.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO). Cooper, *Lost Crusade*, pp.364-365.
[48] Conversation between Brown, Kosygin & PM at Claridges, 13.2.67, **PREM13/1715**(PRO).
[49] Johnson to PM, CAP67046, 13.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO). *Kosygin Visit*, pp.27-28, **FCO15/634**(PRO). Lankford, *Last American Aristocrat*, p.336.

At a Cabinet meeting on 14 February Wilson 'stressed how near he had been to pulling it off over Vietnam'. He later claimed that 'hawks' in the White House had sabotaged his efforts to achieve a cease-fire while Chinese influence in Hanoi was hampered by the Cultural Revolution, and 'when the Soviets were willing to use their good offices in Hanoi'.[50] Brown likewise blamed American 'hawks', but also criticised Wilson for his excessive optimism. In addition, he accused Kosygin of 'leading everybody up the garden [path]', and of having no authority from his peers to act as a mediator. In the aftermath of Kosygin's visit, the Foreign Secretary concluded that Moscow would lose interest in mediation, as the Soviet Premier's conduct in London would have antagonised the North Vietnamese, driving Hanoi closer to the Chinese in the process.[51] The Foreign Office view was that Washington was too focused on achieving military victory in Vietnam, but officials were privately critical of Wilson and Brown's conduct. Gore-Booth stated that his political masters 'tended to overrate their ability' to influence American policy towards Vietnam, with peace initiatives being determined by the need to appease domestic critics rather than by a 'cool estimate' of what British diplomacy could actually achieve.[52] The Permanent Under-Secretary later commented with regards to *Marigold* that Wilson and Brown had no right in 'claiming to be "mediators" as though they had invented or had some special copyright to the plan' - his comments are equally applicable to *Sunflower*.[53] It

[50] Castle, *Diaries*, 14.2.67, p.220. See Wilson's account in *Labour Government*, pp.346-365.
[51] Brown, *In My Way*, pp.139-140. Memorandum of conversation at State Dept, 19.4.67, **FCO15/619**(PRO).
[52] D. Murray to A. de la Mare (SEAD), 10.3.67, **FCO15/598**(PRO). Gore-Booth to de la Mare, 23.1.67, **FCO15/615**(PRO).
[53] Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth*, p.357, pp.361-362. Note by de la Mare, 24.2.67, **FCO15/615**(PRO).

should also be noted that Phase A / Phase B only involved de-escalation, and did not address the practicalities of negotiations. Even if a Phase A / Phase B formula acceptable to both Washington and Hanoi had been found (and assuming that both belligerents would have maintained a cease-fire), Wilson still had little reason to claim in his memoirs that 'a historic opportunity [for peace] had been missed'.[54]

Like their British counterparts, US officials concluded that following the abortive talks in London, the Soviets 'had no alternative but to help Hanoi carry on the war, hoping that changes of attitude in either Hanoi or Washington, or both, will make a [negotiated] solution possible latter'. Administration officials blamed the failure of Phase A / Phase B on the NVA's violation the Tet truce,[55] and were also furious that Wilson had implied in Parliament that they were responsible for the failure of his talks with Kosygin.[56] The British ambassador to Washington, Patrick Dean, commented that the Johnson administration was at fault for failing to inform the British of the discrepancy between the letter to Ho and the formula agreed in London. Palliser noted Rostow's comment (as reported by Dean) that Washington 'had not thought about [the Phase A / Phase B formula] very much' until American officials realised that it had been handed to Kosygin as a diplomatic note.[57] Cooper subsequently recalled that in his conversation with Rostow on the night of the 10th the latter bluntly stated 'we don't give a Goddamn about you, and we don't give a Goddamn about Wilson !'. When the

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[54] Conversation at Claridges, 9.2.67, **PREM13/1715**(PRO). *Kosygin Visit*, p.14, **FCO15/634**(PRO). Wilson, *Labour Government*, p.365

[55] SNIE11-11-67, *Soviet Attitudes and Intentions Toward the Vietnam War*, 4.5.67, **MFF15-419**. Washington to FO, N.469, 16.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO).

[56] Interview with Rusk, 19.5.67, **AHP13/11**. H.C.Deb5s, 741, cols.345-354. *Secret Diplomacy*, p.476, p.481.

[57] Dean to PM, 10.4.67; & Palliser to PM, 12.4.67, **PREM13/2458**(PRO).

Prime Minister met Rostow in London in late February, the latter stated that Johnson felt that he 'had to achieve a balance between readiness to negotiate and a determination to prosecute the war with firmness but moderation' in order to win a second term in office in 1968. Rostow thus expressed Johnson's determination to press for a military victory in Vietnam, and his complete disinterest in third-party efforts to promote peace negotiations. It should be noted that following *Sunflower* the Americans attempted to use the USSR as a channel for diplomatic contacts with the DRV, while keeping would-be mediators such as Britain in the dark.[58]

Wilson emerged from the *Marigold* and *Sunflower* fiascos privately suspecting that Washington was responsible for the failure of both peace initiatives. Against the Foreign Secretary's advice, he pestered Johnson over the 'apparent failure of communication' which had occurred during Kosygin's visit.[59] Wilson's preoccupation with the failed peace initiatives disturbed both Brown and the Foreign Office. When meeting Rapacki at 10 Downing Street on 24 February, Wilson had suggested that London and Warsaw could compare notes on the collapse of *Marigold*.[60] Whitehall's reluctance to undertake an Anglo-Polish *post mortem* was reflected in Gore-Booth's instructions to Thomas Brimelow (who had replaced Clutton in Warsaw) in which the former cautioned against Polish efforts to stir up trouble between London and Washington. Following Brimelow's

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[58] Cooper Interview, I, p.19. Conversation between Rostow & PM at No.10, 24.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO). Gaiduk, *Soviet Union*, pp.156-193.
[59] Brown to Wilson, 14.3.67; Wilson to Brown, 17.3.67, **PREM13/2458**(PRO).
[60] Conversation between Humphrey & PM at No.10, 4.4.67, **PREM13/1919**(PRO). Conversation between PM & Rapacki at No.10, 24.2.67, **PREM13/1918**(PRO).

consultations with Polish diplomats, SEAD concluded that the 'the Poles probably never had a sufficiently clear mandate from the North Vietnamese' to mediate.[61] Wilson's persistence in requesting a detailed analysis of *Marigold* exasperated SEAD officials, one of whom protested that his department was 'unwilling to undertake this entirely profitless analysis'.[62] Brown's visit to Moscow in May 1967, seen by Wilson as another opportunity to press the Soviets to encourage Hanoi to negotiate, eventually distracted the Prime Minister's attention from *Marigold*. The Foreign Secretary's failure to reach any consensus with Gromyko marked the end of British efforts to promote peace talks on Vietnam.[63]

Wilson's persistence in pressing for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam was partly a response to criticism from the Labour left, and partly due to his personal desire to play peace-maker. Yet his continued commitment reflects Crossman's description of the Prime Minister as a 'Yorkshire terrier' who 'having got his teeth into an idea ... worries at it and never gives it up'. His concerns that the Vietnam war could escalate coexisted with genuine disgust at the suffering caused by the conflict. Wilson's preference for negotiation as opposed to confrontation was demonstrated by his handling of the Rhodesian rebellion. Crossman noted that the Prime Minister 'regards himself as ... a statesman able to achieve what no diplomat could achieve' - a comment supported by Wilson's smug comment to Cooper that the *Marigold* initiative proved that mediation 'was not a task to be

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[61] Gore-Booth to Brimelow, 20.3.67; Brimelow to Gore-Booth, 5.4.67; D. Murray, *Vietnam. The Lewandowski Affair*, 14.4.67, **FCO15/646**(PRO).
[62] Palliser to MacLehose, 17.4.67; memorandum by D. Murray, n.d., **FCO15/646**(PRO).
[63] Hershberg, *Marigold*, pp.90-91. Conversation between Brown & Gromyko at Soviet Foreign Ministry, 24.5.67, **PREM13/1919**(PRO).

entrusted to amateurs'.[64] However, until Kosygin's visit it was unclear as to whether Moscow could or would be seen to collaborate with a Western power by encouraging Hanoi to participate in peace talks. As a consequence of China's opposition to a negotiated settlement and the USSR's unwillingness to jeopardise its relations with the DRV, the Soviets were not prepared to work with the British through the Geneva co-chairmanship. The crucial fact which Wilson ignored was that both the Americans and the North Vietnamese believed that a military solution was feasible, and were therefore unwilling to accept a negotiated settlement. Peace-makers have a tendency to presume that the horrors of war are so self-evident that the belligerents will eventually settle for a compromise peace, a sentiment Wilson echoed when he told Kosygin that 'peace was more important than victory'. Yet as far as policy-makers in Washington and Hanoi were concerned, victory was far more important than peace.[65]

Kosygin's visit to Britain (6-13 February): Arms control and European security.

Wilson was advised by the Foreign Office to refer Kosygin to the 'declaration of principles' handed to the Czechoslovaks in December 1966. Prague's only response was that the document should endorse both Germany's Eastern frontier and the legitimacy of the GDR. Foreign Office officials also suggested that Wilson should

[64] 716 H.C.Deb.5s (HMSO 1965), cols.1123-1127. Crossman, I, 4.1.65, p.120; & II, 24.10.66, p.87. Conversation between Cooper & PM at No.10, 18.1.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO). For Wilson's response to the Rhodesian crisis, see Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.365-381, pp.449-458.
[65] Conversation at Claridges, 13.2.67, **PREM13/1715**(PRO).

raise the issue of mutual force reductions in Central Europe, which would not only contribute to East-West *détente*, but would 'also help towards substantial reductions of NATO forces in Western Europe and alleviate our financial problems over offset and relations with our allies on this problem'. The British presumed that Kosygin would enquire about the establishment of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group (which had originated with McNamara's 'special committee' idea), while for its part Britain's concerns on arms control focused on the prospects for a CTBT and the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) problem.[66]

While Rusk's conversations with the Gromyko in New York (October 1966) led to bilateral negotiations on non-proliferation, a CTBT was blocked by Washington's insistence on on-site inspections, which Moscow opposed. During a meeting with Soviet scientists in late September Solly Zuckerman, the Prime Minister's chief scientific advisor, proposed that a tripartite conference could be convened to discuss alternative means of verification, in particular the use of seismic technology to detect underground nuclear tests. Zuckerman suggested that a tripartite meeting could be held in London, with the British government taking the credit for breaking the impasse over CTBT negotiations.[67] Brown supported Zuckerman's proposal, but American officials were sceptical as to whether tripartite talks could produce a test-ban treaty, even if the Soviets agreed to participate.[68] Brown's proposal of a tripartite scientific conference was vetoed by Gromyko on

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[66] KV(67)1, *Steering Brief*; KV(67)4c, *Europe: The Role of Multilateral Organisations in East-West Relations*, & KV(67)4e, *Europe: Germany and Berlin*, 26.1.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO).
[67] Zuckerman to PM, 20.9.66. **PREM13/2440**(PRO). Solly Zuckerman, *Monkeys, Men and Missiles. An Autobiography*, (London; Collins 1986), pp.331-339.
[68] Zuckerman to PM, 18.10.66, **PREM13/2440**(PRO). *Visit of UK Foreign Secretary George Brown October 14 1966. Scope Paper*, 12.10.66, **MF411**.

23 November, who stated in English 'We definitely disfavour it'. The Foreign Secretary expressed his disappointment in Cabinet, commenting on Zuckerman's initial contacts that his Soviet interlocutors had 'gone beyond their brief' in agreeing to technical talks, and that the Soviet military intended to continue carrying out underground tests. Gromyko had also made it clear that the USSR preferred to deal directly with the USA on non-proliferation.[69] Foreign Office officials expressed the hope that Kosygin could be persuaded to reconsider the CTBT proposal during his visit, and also hoped to clarify Soviet policy towards ABMs.[70]

The Soviets had deployed ABMs to defend Moscow, and US intelligence assessments commented on the stationing of a new missile system, known as *Tallinn*, in the North-West of the USSR. While the CIA argued that *Tallinn* had an anti-aircraft role, American military intelligence concluded that it could be upgraded as part of a country-wide ABM defence network.[71] This controversy was grist to the mill for the JCS and for Congressmen who supported a national ABM system, but McNamara believed that a 'thick' anti-missile deployment would not only be prohibitively expensive, but would also encourage Soviet efforts to build up their ICBM arsenal, thus escalating the arms race. McNamara won a temporary victory when Johnson decided at a meeting in Austin, Texas (December 1966) that while American research and development into ABMs would continue,

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[69] *Visit of the Foreign Secretary to the Soviet Union 22-25 November 1966*, NS1051/290, **FO371/188928**(PRO). CC62(66)62nd conclusions, 1.12.66, **CAB128/41**(PRO).
[70] KV(67)4(c), *Europe: The Role of Multilateral Organisations in East-West Relations*, 26.1.67; & KV(67)1, *Steering Brief*, **CAB133/365**(PRO).
[71] NIE11-3-65, *Soviet Strategic Air and Missile Defenses*, 18.11.65, **RG263**: 190, 28, 16-17. NARAII.

the USA would seek agreement with the USSR to limit anti-missile systems. Johnson wrote to Kosygin in January, and his new ambassador to Moscow, Llewellyn Thompson, suggested a superpower summit to discuss ABMs, but the Soviets delayed their response.[72] The British had sought bilateral talks on missile defence with the Americans in September 1965, but Rusk had informed Dean that Washington still had to make a decision on ABM deployment. The Foreign Office was not only concerned that anti-missile defences 'might incidentally cast doubts on the credibility of United Kingdom strategic nuclear weapons', but expressed fears that an intensified US-Soviet arms race would increase superpower tensions, 'with particularly serious implications for arms control and disarmament'.[73]

As noted above, the meetings between Wilson, Brown and Kosygin were focused on Vietnam, although their discussions in Downing Street on 10 February concerned problems closer to home. Brown referred to the draft 'declaration of principles' and expressed cautious interest in a European security conference, as proposed in the Bucharest declaration. Britain 'thought it essential that such a conference should be prepared very carefully in advance', and that American participation should be mandatory. The Foreign Secretary turned to West Germany, stating that the 'Grand Coalition' government of Helmut Kiesinger (which had assumed office in November 1966) was 'entirely sincere in desiring to renounce the past and to act peacefully and democratically'. Kosygin responded with a

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[72] J. Clearwater, *The Birth of Strategic Arms Control During the Johnson Administration, 1964-1969*, (PhD Thesis, KCL 1996), pp.182-196. J. Newhouse, *Cold Dawn. The Story of SALT*, (Toronto; Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1973), pp.86-87.

[73] Rusk to Dean, 25.9.65, in *US Nuclear History* microfiche collection at LHCMA, **MFF16/1410**. KV(67)2d, *Disarmament: Anti-Ballistic Missiles*, 26.1.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO).

predictable anti-German tirade, maintaining that the emergence of the far-right National Democratic Party heralded the return of Nazism, and he asserted that the FRG should renounce its 'revanchist demands' and recognise Europe's post-1945 frontiers. Wilson proposed 'an agreed and phased troop withdrawal in Europe', claiming that his aim was not 'to save money but to preserve the military balance and reduce tension'. Kosygin responded that in order 'to bring this about there was one prerequisite; a declaration on the inviolability of existing boundaries'. Despite what Wilson had previously presumed, the Soviets were clearly not interested in any NATO / WTO mutual force reductions.

Kosygin did not complain about the establishment of the Nuclear Planning Group, but was contemptuous of the British attitude towards ABMs. Brown stressed that an ABM race would block agreement on a CTBT and could interfere with progress towards non-proliferation. The Soviet Premier sarcastically commented that the British supported the 'attitude of President Johnson and Mr McNamara [which] seemed to be to ask why they should start making anti-missile systems when it was cheaper to make offensive weapons'. Brown and Wilson stressed that an ABM build-up would lead both superpowers to increase their nuclear arsenals in order to saturate anti-missile defences, which would 'give a very dangerous further twist to the arms race spiral'. Kosygin's retort had ominous implications for American efforts at an agreement to limit ABMs, and indicated that the Soviet leadership was in two minds about further developments in missile defence. He

maintained that he opposed ABM development because of its costs, but that the missile defence issue was 'very complex'.[74]

Apart from the failure of the Phase A / Phase B proposal, Wilson had made no progress with Kosygin on ABMs or mutual force reductions in Europe. The Soviet Premier showed no interest in the 'declaration of principles', and continued to express hostility towards West Germany. Furthermore, Kosygin insisted that any European security conference should exclude the USA. The Prime Minister was, however, pleased with the outcome of the discussions on trade and technological co-operation on the 7th (discussed in the next chapter), and regarded the draft Foreign Office communiqué's treatment of these issues as 'quite unsatisfactory'. Wilson informed Brown that Kosygin had originally suggested a 'non-aggression' treaty, but was persuaded to accept a treaty of 'friendship and peaceful co-operation', which would establish a framework for bilateral cultural, commercial and scientific contacts, and would be compatible with the existing alliance commitments of both powers. Wilson was annoyed that the Foreign Office merely wanted to 'examine the possibility' of a treaty, and 'watered down' the 'positive discussions' he had with Kosygin. The section on trade in the final communiqué, with its references to ministerial contacts and the need for regular bilateral consultations, was based on a paragraph drafted by Wilson himself, rather than his Private Secretary.[75]

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[74] KV(67)5th meeting between Brown, Kosygin & PM at No.10, 10.2.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO).
[75] PM to Brown, & Palliser to MacLehose, 11.2.67, **PREM13/1842**(PRO). *Visit of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR A. N. Kosygin to Great Britain, 6-13 February. Communiqué*, **PREM13/1840**(PRO).

The Kosygin visit and its impact on Anglo-Soviet political relations: February-December 1967.

Harrison argued in March 1967 that after over two years of acrimony, the 'spirit of Kosygin' had a positive impact in promoting Anglo-Soviet dialogue.[76] In their final discussion on 13 February, Wilson and Kosygin had agreed to establish a hot-line link between London and Moscow. The Prime Minister had sought a teleprinter link similar to that established between the superpowers ever since his second visit to Moscow, and the hot-line was operational by the end of October 1967.[77] Kosygin also suggested that the Prime Minister could visit Moscow in the autumn of 1967, in time for the Fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. This prospect horrified Brown and his officials, who felt that it would be embarrassing if 'a Social Democratic Prime Minister assisted in the celebration of a Communist *coup d'etat*'.[78] At the end of 1967, the Soviets agreed to invite the Prime Minister for a third visit to Moscow, scheduled for the 22-24 January 1968.[79] By this time, the 'spirit of Kosygin' which Harrison had earlier referred to had effectively evaporated.

This deterioration of Anglo-Soviet relations reflected the political stalemate in East-West relations in 1967. With the exception of Romania, which established diplomatic relations with the FRG (January 1967), the East European states did little to promote *détente*. At the conference of Communist parties at Karlovy Vary

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[76] Moscow to FO, No.322 & 347, 3.3.67 & 7.3.67, **FCO28/371**(PRO).
[77] Conversation between Kosygin & PM, 13.2.67, in *Private Talks: Prime Minister-Kosygin*, 21.3.67, **FCO28/393**(PRO). Kosygin to PM, 31.10.67, **FC28/371**(PRO).
[78] Gore-Booth to Hood & Hayman, 20.4.67, **FCO28/398**(PRO). Smith to Palliser, 8.2.67; & Gore-Booth to P. Hayman, 13.2.67, **FCO28/371**(PRO).
[79] Moscow to FO, No.2050, 8.12.67; FO to Moscow, 4.1.68, **FCO28/398**(PRO).

in Czechoslovakia (April), the WTO states called for the abolition of NATO, recognition of the GDR, and an 'all European' treaty (deliberately excluding the USA) renouncing the use or threat of force. While NATO's European members had sought to develop their contacts with bloc states - the UK's 'declaration of principles' had originated with Anglo-Czechoslovak discussions, while the Belgians had informal consultations with the Poles - the Americans in particular felt that the Eastern bloc states were employing individual contacts with Western states to divide NATO.[80] While the USA was sceptical of the value of diplomatic contacts with the bloc states, the Belgians took the lead in promoting a review of Alliance policy. This review - named after Belgium's Foreign Minister, Pierre Harmel - and its concluding report (December 1967), was intended to meet the 'Gaullist challenge' and to address the growing perception in Western public opinion that NATO had lost its validity.[81]

The Harmel report established defence and the promotion of *détente* as the 'two pillars' of NATO policy. The Wilson government supported the Belgian initiative as its conclusions reflected the British view that, as Brown put it, NATO was not 'an old-style Cold War crusade against a Communist attack which may never come', but was 'constructive in terms of *détente* as well as watertight in terms of defence and deterrence'. However, the argument that both the Soviet threat and East-West tensions had diminished had been used by London to justify

[80] Wolfe, *Soviet Power*, pp.315-321. R. Clift (UKDelNATO), *NATO Council Discussions on East-West Relations, 17 May*, 23.5.67, **FCO28/17**(PRO). CIA memorandum, *Soviet Military Policy in 1967*, 14.6.67, **MF373**.
[81] F. Bozo, '*Détente* versus Alliance: France, the United States and the Politics of the Harmel Report (1964-1968)', in *Contemporary European History*, 7,3 (1998), pp.343-366.

efforts to reduce BAOR, and Ministers were aware that a British version of the Harmel report would have been regarded by other NATO powers as merely a pretext for Britain to reduce its commitment to West European defence.[82]

There was no Warsaw Pact equivalent to the Harmel report. Poland, which had hitherto been considered by the British to be the most *détente*-minded of Eastern bloc states, was by 1967 particularly rigid in its defence of the *status quo* and its hostility to the FRG. As one Warsaw embassy official noted in August 1967, the Gomulka regime was encouraging popular anti-German sentiment, with considerable (and understandable) success.[83] As noted above, Czechoslovakia undermined the proposed 'declaration of principles' in January 1967, insisting that it should recognise existing frontiers in Europe. The Czechoslovaks also informed the British that the declaration was a purely bilateral matter, thus defeating the original purpose of the exercise.[84] In contrast, the Romanians favoured increased trade and technological co-operation with the Western powers, and Bucharest had defied the rest of the bloc by recognising the FRG. Yet even though Ceausescu favoured improved East-West relations, he was not prepared either to risk a breach with Moscow, or to reform Romania's Stalinist regime. Although the Foreign Office linked the internal 'evolution' of individual bloc states with the development of *détente*, it was ironic that the East European state that was most

[82] OPD(67)38th meeting, 28.11.67, **CAB148/30**(PRO). OPD(67)87, *France and the Atlantic Alliance*, by Brown, 20.11.67, **CAB148/34**(PRO).
[83] Brown to Brimelow, 23.3.67,; & D. Tonkin (Warsaw) to Rhodes, 17.8.67, **FCO28/271**(PRO).
[84] Smith to Hayman, 13.1.67; & FO to Prague, No.31, 17.1.67, **FCO28/1**(PRO).

willing to improve its relations with the Western powers was also ruled by the most repressive and least liberal of the Soviet bloc regimes.[85]

In the same way that contacts between Eastern and West European states remained frozen, US-Soviet relations were affected both by the ongoing war in Vietnam and Moscow's reluctance to discuss strategic arms limitations with Washington. After months of frustration, the Johnson administration announced that it would build a 'thin' ABM force, ostensibly to counter the emerging Chinese nuclear threat (19 September 1967).[86] This decision was particularly unwelcome to the British because any superpower ABM race could render the UK's nuclear force obsolete soon after the first *Polaris* submarine - HMS *Resolution* - was due to enter service (March 1968). The Wilson government had decided not to purchase the next-generation of US-designed submarine-launched missiles (*Poseidon*), but to increase *Polaris*'s prospects of breaching Soviet ABM defences its warheads needed to be 'hardened' and fitted with dummy 'penetration aids'. While the MoD, Foreign Office and Mintech supported the upgrading of *Polaris*, the Treasury and DEA were opposed on financial grounds, particularly after the devaluation of the pound (November 1967). Zuckerman also argued that the proposed upgrading of the British deterrent was strategic nonsense, as the UK would never wage nuclear war alone against the USSR.[87]

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[90] J. Chadwick (Bucharest) to Brown, 15.1.68, **FCO28/271**(PRO). Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.311-314.
[86] Gaiduk, *Soviet Union*, pp.109-111. Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, pp.89-92, pp.95-99. McNamara justified this decision in *The Essence of Security. Reflections in Office*, (Hodder & Stoughton 1968), pp.163-166.
[87] Conversation between Brown & Eugene Rostow at FO, 14.9.67, **FCO7/767**(PRO). COS23/64, *Polaris - Command and Control of Firing Orders*, 15.3.67, **DEFE5/173**(PRO). OPD(O)(67)16, *British Nuclear Weapons Policy*, 10.10.67, **CAB148/81**(PRO). Zuckerman, *Monkeys, Men*, pp.386-396.

The debate on *Polaris* was confined to the Cabinet's Nuclear Policy Committee (PN), established by Wilson in September 1966, and came to a head in December the following year. Healey argued that the prospects of further proliferation and the political consequences of leaving de Gaulle's France as the only nuclear power in Western Europe made *Polaris*'s retention and upgrading vital. The Defence Secretary also hinted that the future reliability of the US nuclear deterrent was uncertain, and claimed that 'the Soviet Union might wish to attack this country without also attacking the United States'. Under these circumstances, Healey argued, the USSR 'might only be deterred from such an attack on our cities if we ourselves had the capability to inflict heavy damage on her'. On 5 January 1968 the majority of the PN, including Wilson, sided with Healey, and authorised further studies into redesigning the *Polaris* warheads so that they could survive Soviet ABM defences.[88] In December 1973 the Heath government commissioned the upgrading of *Polaris*, and the costs of this programme - known as *Chevaline* - subsequently spiralled out of control.[89] Furthermore, due to the need to test the redeveloped warheads the British lost interest in pursuing a CTBT.

The proposed Anglo-Soviet 'treaty of friendship', which Wilson and Kosygin had agreed to in February, had caused controversy within NATO. The Prime Minister informed Johnson that both he and Brown saw 'no particular

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[88] Hennessy, *Prime Minister*, p.291. PN(67)4th meeting, 5.12.67, **CAB134/3120**(PRO). Tony Benn, *Office Without Power. Diaries 1968-72*, (Hutchinson 1988), 5.1.68, p.5. E. Rose (Cabinet Office) to Trend, 18.1.68, **CAB165/310**. The actual minutes of this PN meeting remain classified.
[89] Hennessy, *Muddling Through*, pp.117-121. Healey, *Time of My Life*, p.313.

harm' in the proposed treaty, and the OPD endorsed the Foreign Office's draft text in early April.[90] However, Shuckburgh's successor in NATO, Bernard Burrows, warned his superiors that most Alliance members were critical of the treaty, and he recommended that the NAC be consulted on the draft text. Senior Foreign Office officials were annoyed by the allied response, and were unwilling to submit a draft text for 'nit-picking' within NATO. Smith slyly suggested that Burrows would 'find it easier, in conscience' to face his NAC counterparts if he too remained uninformed about the content of the draft treaty.[91] An exception was made for West Germans, who were consulted on the treaty text in advance. One Bonn embassy official stated that '[the] skeleton of the original MacMillan (sic) visit to Moscow is ... still apt to pop out of German cupboards at a moment's notice', and British officials conceded that Bonn needed to be reassured that the FRG was not going to be 'abandoned' as the price of any Anglo-Soviet treaty.[92]

The Americans made no effort to conceal their displeasure with the proposed treaty. Rusk was informed by one State Department official that 'we do not see any particular good which can come of [this treaty] and are concerned at the divisive effect it is having on the Alliance', while Cleveland criticised the concept of a 'friendship' treaty with the Soviets in similar terms within the NAC. The British nonetheless pressed ahead, with Greenhill travelling to Moscow in mid-April to present the draft text to Soviet officials. The Soviet response was

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[90] Gore-Booth to Brown, 9.2.67, **FCO28/374**(PRO). PM to Johnson, PMUK003/11, 11.2.67, **PREM13/2114**(PRO). OPD(67)25, *Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Peaceful Co-operation*, 4.4.67, **CAB148/34**(PRO). The British draft of the treaty is copied in Appendix 3.

[91] B. Burrows to Hood, 8.3.67; Hood to Hayman, 10.3.67; & note by Smith, 13.3.67, **FCO28/376**(PRO).

[92] A. Goodison (Bonn) to A. Campbell (Western Department), 9.3.67, **FCO28/376**. E. Tomkins (Bonn) to Campbell, 21.3.67, **FCO28/377**(PRO).

that the draft's 'general approach [was] acceptable', but had to address additional, but unspecified, issues beyond bilateral relations. This was the last heard from the Soviets on the treaty for nine months.[93] During his second visit to Moscow (23-26 May) Brown pressed Gromyko for a Soviet response to the draft text. The Foreign Secretary stated that '[the] Treaty of Friendship had been a Soviet initiative which the British had followed up with enthusiasm' and that it was 'surprising that the Soviet side were moving so slowly'. Although Gromyko promised that Moscow would soon produce its own draft, Brown returned to London empty-handed.[94]

The Foreign Secretary's visit to Moscow was overshadowed by the increased tensions in the Middle East caused by Egypt's closure of the Gulf of Aqaba. In order to avert any embarrassment during Brown's visit, the Foreign Office insisted on an embargo on RAF SIGINT flights close to Soviet territory from the 19-26 May, but the escalation of Arab-Israeli hostilities provided an inauspicious background to the Foreign Secretary's visit.[95] Brown's conversations which Kosygin and Gromyko revolved around the Middle Eastern crisis, which his hosts blamed on Israel. In his analysis of the visit, Harrison told Brown that in his opinion Brezhnev and the CPSU ideologues - who were 'temperamentally probably more suspicious of the West, less pragmatical (sic), tougher and more dogmatic than Kosygin' - were more active in foreign policy-making. The ambassador described Anglo-Soviet relations as a 'delicate plant' which could not be turned

[93] J. Leddy (State Dept) to Rusk, 15.4.67, **MF409**. Burrows to Hood, 16.3.67: & FO to UKDelNATO, No.733, 18.4.67, **FCO28/377**(PRO).
[94] Conversation between Brown & Gromyko at UK Embassy, 24.5.67, *Visit of the Foreign Secretary to the Soviet Union, 23-26 May 1967*, **FCO28/406**(PRO).
[95] Healey to Brown, 19.4.67, **AIR20/12133**(PRO). RAF SIGINT flights in close proximity to the Soviet frontier were resumed in July 1967; see Vice-Chief of Air Staff (VCAS) to Healey, 19.6.67, **AIR20/12133**(PRO).

into 'magic beanstalks' by an injection of the 'Kosygin spirit' evident in London three months previously. The UK and USSR were on opposite sides on the major international issues, and Soviet policy was difficult 'even in the best of circumstances' to 'influence or deflect', particularly for a medium power like the Britain. Nevertheless, Harrison again drew comfort from the apparent readiness of the Soviet leadership to talk to their British counterparts, who they considered to be 'sensible men whose views are worth hearing and with whom one can do business'.[96] However, Smith concluded that Britain had shown too much eagerness in developing contacts with the USSR. The 'treaty of friendship' was in limbo, the Soviets had shown no interest in a long-term trade agreement, and Moscow remained uncompromising on Germany, Vietnam, the Arab-Israeli crisis and the Brooke case. Smith suggested that it was time for the UK to wait and see what concessions the Soviets were prepared to make for improved relations.[97] Smith's comments reflected the growing concern within the Foreign Office at the USSR's increasingly contemptuous attitude towards Britain, a sentiment which became more prevalent the following year.

In the aftermath of the Six Day War, Harrison suggested that Kosygin's position within the *Politburo* had suffered as a result of the Arab defeat. One of the Foreign Office's Soviet experts, Edward Orchard, concurred with Harrison that Kosygin was in disfavour within the *Politburo* as a result of his visit to Britain. The Soviet Premier had failed to encourage Wilson to break ranks with the USA

[96] Brown to Harrison, 26.5.67; & Harrison to Brown, 1.6.67, **FCO28/406**(PRO).
[97] Smith to Hayman, 2.6.67; Hayman to Smith, 6.6.67, **FCO28/406**(PRO).

and West Germany, and the USSR had been 'placed in a difficult position' with Hanoi because Kosygin had responded to the Prime Minister's peacemaking overtures on Vietnam. In contrast at the beginning of August 1967 Gore-Booth painted a gloomy picture of Anglo-Soviet relations. In his view, Moscow did not see the UK as an '*interlocuteur*' in Europe - even de Gaulle was considered by the Soviets to be merely a disruptive force within the Western world, rather than as a potential negotiating partner. Gore-Booth concluded that if Britain's efforts to join the EEC failed, the USSR could approach the UK with 'some apparently attractive but probably specious offers of economic and other forms of co-operation with us', but opportunities for genuine bilateral co-operation were limited.[98] The Permanent Under-Secretary's conclusions reflected the general mood of the Foreign Office six months after Kosygin's visit, and contributed to the reassessment of British policy towards the USSR which followed Wilson's third visit to Moscow (January 1968).

Conclusions:

The 'spirit of Kosygin' which Harrison referred to in March 1967 proved to be as ephemeral as the 'spirit of Geneva' had been the previous decade. In practical terms, the Wilson government gained nothing from its contacts with the Soviet leadership on arms control, European security and Vietnam. The ongoing

[98] Harrison to Hayman, 1.6.67; Harrison to Gore-Booth, 26.6.67; E. Orchard to I. Sutherland, 13.7.67; Gore-Booth to Harrison, 2.8.67, **FCO28/371**(PRO).

negotiations between the USA and USSR on non-proliferation were welcomed by the British, although in contrast with the LTBT in 1963 the UK was not even peripherally involved. As far as the failure of *Sunflower* was concerned, both Wilson and (to a lesser extent) Brown were more inclined to blame Washington for its collapse than Moscow. Nonetheless, the outcome of the Kosygin talks punctured the illusion entertained by the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and the ambassador to Moscow that the UK was an 'intermediary' facilitating contact between the superpowers.

The fate of the proposed Anglo-Soviet 'friendship treaty' reflected the general state of East-West relations during 1967. As noted above, despite the efforts of other Western European powers to develop diplomatic contacts with Eastern Europe *détente* remained stagnant. For all de Gaulle's anti-American posturing, France gained no practical results from its own dealings with the Eastern bloc. Moscow ignored the French President's proposal for four-power negotiations (involving the superpowers, the UK and France) to diffuse the Arab-Israeli crisis in May 1967, and Gomulka made his disdain for de Gaulle's *Europe totale* rhetoric evident during the latter's visit to Poland four months later. Despite West Germany's efforts to improve their relations with its East European neighbours, Romania was the only bloc state to respond to the Kiesinger government's early attempts at *Ostpolitik*.[99] The British were not alone in having little to show for their efforts to develop *détente*.

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[99] Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, pp.762-769. Narinski, 'Les Sovietiques', in Bozo, Mélandri & Vaïsse, *France et l'OTAN*, p.515. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe*, pp.182-186.

A more pertinent criticism concerns the fact that Kosygin became the focus of London's efforts to foster Anglo-Soviet goodwill. Wilson treated contacts with the Soviet Premier as being intrinsically important, and showed little interest in determining who the balance of power in the Kremlin favoured. This was probably due to the fact that the Prime Minister felt that he had established a rapport with Kosygin. An additional factor was that the Soviet Premier, in British official opinion, represented the technocratic class who would promote the internal reform and 'evolution' of the Soviet system. Yet despite being the head of government, Kosygin was by no means 'first among equals' within the *Politburo*. Brezhnev adopted a lower profile as far as relations with the Western powers were concerned, and it should be noted that he did not assume a direct role in dealings with American Presidents and other Western leaders until the 1970s, once he had emerged as the dominant figure in the *Politburo*. Nonetheless, the fact was that the source of power within the Soviet system lay in the CPSU, rather than the state structure, and this was a factor which Wilson and other Western politicians failed to appreciate.

CHAPTER 6: BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS EAST-WEST TRADE. FEBRUARY 1967-AUGUST 1968

Wilson's interest in East-West trade derived from his Ministerial career in the 1940s, and by the time Labour returned to government the Foreign Office regarded commercial contacts with the Eastern bloc as one of the only means Western countries had of encouraging the internal 'evolution' of Eastern Europe. However, the Foreign Office's attempts to remove import quotas on Soviet bloc imports in 1965 had been thwarted by inter-departmental rivalries within Whitehall. In January 1967, the President of the Board of Trade pessimistically concluded that the bilateral trade imbalance would continue to widen, but the Prime Minister hoped that Leyland and the British Motor Corporation (BMC) would follow on from Fiat's success in negotiating a contract to build a car factory in the USSR.[1]

Much to the Board of Trade's chagrin, Britain had taken no retaliatory measures in spite of Moscow's failure to redress the Anglo-Soviet trade imbalance. A week before Kosygin's arrival, Wilson expressed the hope that the visit would produce a 'striking new initiative' on bilateral trade, preferably in the form of an equivalent of the Franco-Soviet 'Grand Commission' on scientific and technological co-operation established following Kosygin's visit to Paris (December 1966).[2] The Prime Minister was persuaded by the Board of Trade and the Foreign Office to settle for Ministerial discussions between Jay and the Minister of

[1] A. Halls (No.10) to W. Nicoll (BoT), 14.1.67; & Jay to PM, 23.1.67, **PREM13/1863**(PRO).
[2] Paris to FO, No.137, 2.2.67, & annotated comment by PM, **PREM13/2406**(PRO). On bilateral co-operation between France and the USSR, see Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War*, pp.90-91.

Technology, Tony Benn, and their Soviet counterparts. Wilson clearly wanted to have something to show from Kosygin's visit, and Ministers felt that the success of BMC and Leyland's bids would depend on the course of Wilson's discussions with the Soviet Premier on political issues.[3]

As noted above, Foreign Office officials concluded that one of the main objectives of Kosygin's visit was to promote Anglo-Soviet trade and technological co-operation. The Foreign Office's assessment did, however, question the extent of the Soviet Premier's authority within the Kremlin. Brezhnev had consolidated his position within the *Politburo*, while the increases in defence expenditure and the 'failure of the leadership to produce the details of the 1966-1970 five year plan', suggested that Kosygin's reform programme had been delayed. The Soviet Premier's proposals to decentralise the command economy were never implemented. According to Geoffrey Hosking, Kosygin's reforms were abandoned because of resistance from CPSU officials determined to retain control of economic planning, and because 'serious implementation of [these reforms] would have threatened the priority accorded to military production'. Robert Service argues that it was Brezhnev who undermined the Soviet premier's efforts to shift economic policy from party control.[4]

Jay and Benn were present when Wilson and Kosygin discussed trading relations at 10 Downing Street (7 February). When the President of the Board of

[3] Nicoll to Palliser, 6.2.67; & MacLehose to Palliser, 7.2.67, **PREM13/2406**(PRO). MISC136(67)1st meeting at House of Commons, 30.1.67, **CAB130/311**(PRO).
[4] KV(67)1, **CAB133/365**(PRO). Hosking, *Soviet Union*, p.365. Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.379-380.

Trade protested at the £40 million gap in bilateral trade, Kosygin responded that Britain traded 'from a position of strength' because of the strategic embargo, thereby implying that Soviet resentment over COCOM restrictions was a barrier to increased imports of British goods. Kosygin called for the abolition of COCOM, to which Wilson responded that he believed that the lists of embargoed items should be reduced. He observed that 'a common list had come to be applied to the Soviet Union and to China', and that this was arguably 'an out-of-date conception which needed looking at'. The Prime Minister was 'attracted' by Kosygin's suggestion of a long-term trade agreement, and both agreed to regular consultations between their two trade Ministers.[5]

While Benn successfully negotiated a technological agreement with his opposite number, V. A. Kirillin, in January 1968, British exports to the USSR for 1967 as a whole reached the record level of £64.2 million. However, as one Foreign Office brief from January 1968 noted, this 'still leaves too large an imbalance' in bilateral trade.[6] Furthermore, the devaluation crisis of November 1967 distracted Whitehall's attention from the issue of liberalising trade with the Eastern bloc states. The COCOM review of 1968 therefore became the focus of the 'striking new initiative' in East-West trade that Wilson had expressed his hopes for.[7] When Kosygin claimed that the UK 'traded from a position of strength' as a consequence of the strategic embargo, no one on the British side

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[5] Smith, *Kosygin Visit. Communiqué*, 11.2.67, **PREM13/1842**(PRO). KV(67)2nd meeting between Benn, Jay, Kosygin & PM at No.10, 7.2.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO).
[6] PCO(68)5th meeting, 24.4.68, **FCO28/60**. PMV(M)(68)1, *Prime Minister's Visit to Moscow January, 1968. Steering Brief*, 17.1.68, **FCO28/400**.
[7] MISC136(67)1st meeting, 30.1.67, **CAB130/311**(PRO).

pointed out that COCOM's restrictions applied to all Western trade with Communist countries, not merely that of the UK.[8] Kosygin's intention in referring to the strategic embargo seems to have been to play on British suspicions, which were widespread within Whitehall, that other Western powers were not abiding by COCOM's rules when trading with the Eastern bloc. The Soviet Premier's comments merely reinforced British intentions to liberalise the strategic embargo and reduce the number of items proscribed by COCOM.

The development of British policy towards the COCOM review: February-October 1967.

Previous reviews of the strategic embargo had, in the opinion of officials in the ESC(O) (the official Strategic Exports Committee), 'produced few results at the cost of much time and energy', and officials resented the fact that throughout the 1966 review their American counterparts had been unwilling to share intelligence information or to justify their objections to proposed reductions in the COCOM lists. The DIS estimated that the 'I' list in particular could be cut by half without compromising Western security, permitting the export of items such as motor vehicles, synthetic oils and rubber, metal alloys and machine tools. The principal obstacle, in British eyes, was that COCOM restrictions applied to all Communist countries, and that as far as computer exports were concerned, 'some valuable markets in Russia and Eastern Europe were denied to us because the United States did not want certain items to be exported to China'. The Americans

[8] KV(67)2nd meeting, 7.2.67, **CAB133/365**(PRO).

proposed the reintroduction of the China differential in February 1966, but the French objected, because of the impact this would have on Sino-French trading relations. The idea of a China differential was therefore shelved before the British had time to consider it.[9] The following year both the ESC(O) and its Ministerial counterpart (ESC) debated the adoption of the China differential as a means of relaxing the embargo on the USSR and the East European states.

By mid-1967, the Johnson administration's intention of using trade as a means of 'bridge-building' had come to grief. Following the conclusions of the Miller Committee on East-West trade (March 1965), the administration had half-heartedly supported the introduction of the East-West Trade Relations Bill in Congress (May 1966). However, many Congressmen opposed the relaxation of trading relations with bloc states because of the Vietnam war and Soviet and East European support for the DRV, and Johnson was unwilling to risk defeat by pressing the case for the trade bill.[10] David Bendall, a British diplomat based in Washington, noted that the State Department's East European experts were demoralised by the failure of the administration's 'bridge-building' policy in the face of Congressional opposition.[11] In addition to domestic political hostility towards trade with North Vietnam's Eastern bloc allies, the internal debate over ABMs and the concern over the Chinese H-bomb test (May 1967) highlighted American concerns that Western exports of high-technology goods could enhance

[9] ESC(O)(66)2nd meeting, 15.12.66, **CAB134/2798**(PRO). ESC(O)(67)13; *International Strategic Embargo - Review of Policy*, 2.3.67, **CAB134/2799**(PRO).
[10] Rusk to Johnson, 7.1.66; & M. Bundy to Johnson, 18.2.66, *FRUS IX*, pp.506-507, pp.511-512.
[11] ESC(O)(67)6th meeting, 4.10.67, **CAB134/2799**(PRO). Bendall to H. Smith, 6.10.67, **FCO28/14**(PRO).

China's nuclear programme. In a critical analysis of British policy towards COCOM, Bruce observed that while the UK supported the strategic embargo in principle, it adopted 'a liberal, and frankly commercial, view towards the question of what could be considered strategic'. Britain's livelihood depended upon foreign trade, and the UK was less inclined than the USA 'to sacrifice export earnings for what we may consider to be the greater good'. The British therefore supported the relaxation of COCOM restrictions, considering the American position to be excessive and not entirely altruistic - the calculation being that the USA employed COCOM to bar its Western rivals from markets it was unable, or unwilling, to exploit. Bruce acknowledged that the Americans had not made their case easier in disputes over the embargo, and were considered to be 'crying wolf' over Chinese military capabilities.[12] The Wilson government had approved computer sales to China in late 1966, despite Washington's objections, and COCOM had again become a cause of Anglo-American dispute, compounding the impact of Vietnam, the offsets crisis and the ABM problem.[13]

When the ESC(O) discussed COCOM restrictions in April-May 1967, there was general consensus that the embargo lists were in need of revision. The strategic embargo was regarded by 'informed opinion' in Parliament and the business community as a commercial own-goal, because rival firms in Western European were flouting COCOM's rules and had an unfair advantage in their trade with the Eastern bloc. According to one contemporary study on East-West

[12] London to State Dept, 9.12.66, *FRUS IX*, pp.525-528. See Clearwater, *Strategic Arms Control*, pp.280-283, & Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, pp.81-86, on contemporary concerns over the Chinese nuclear programme.
[13] OPD(66)34th & 45th meetings, 5.8.66 & 18.11.66, **CAB148/25**(PRO).

trade, there was some substance to these suspicions, although the fact that West European states bent the embargo's rules did not give them a significant commercial advantage over the UK. American opinions on COCOM could not be simply disregarded, because apart from the larger aspect of Anglo-American relations the British computing industry was dependent upon US components. Britain could use the 'special national interest' clause in COCOM's rules to permit exports of high-technology goods, but if the items exported were constructed with American as well as British components the USA's approval was required. In addition, the Board of Trade was uncertain about restoring the China differential, particularly if this involved increasing existing restrictions on trade with the PRC. The Board of Trade and the CRO argued that if the UK took the lead on reintroducing the China differential, Beijing would retaliate against British trade and possibly cause trouble over Hong Kong - the second concern became more pronounced as the Cultural Revolution intensified.[14]

The ESC(O) accepted a compromise that would form the basis of Britain's approach to the 1968 COCOM review. The UK would accept the present restrictions as applicable to China, but would propose that reductions would apply to the 'Soviet bloc' alone, on the grounds that '[not] only do we now regard Soviet aggression as less likely but also the Soviet bloc had made such technological progress' that the COCOM lists had lost much of their validity. In their report to the ESC, officials observed that the rationale behind the abolition of

[14] Kronsten, 'East-West Trade', pp.273-274. ESC(O)(67)1st & 2nd meetings, 7.4.67 & 4.5.67, **CAB134/2799**(PRO). Ian Mikardo's comments in Parliament on 20.11.67 (H.C.Deb5s, 754 (HMSO 1967), cols.921-922) reflected wider opinion on COCOM within the Labour Party.

the China differential the previous decade - that of a unified 'Sino-Soviet bloc' - was no longer valid, and that since 1959 the Soviets had imposed their own embargo on transfers of high-technology (especially nuclear) materials to the Chinese. British policy towards Eastern Europe was based on the principle that East-West *détente* could be reinforced by improved commercial relations. Yet the Americans had opposed potentially lucrative computer and telecommunications sales to the Eastern bloc states on the grounds that these could be re-exported to the PRC. Due to the Vietnam war and the long-term threat posed by Chinese military power, Washington would not reverse its China policy, and the only means of easing the embargo for the 'Soviet bloc' would be to accept existing restrictions as applicable to the PRC only. Officials concluded that the Americans would accept this *quid pro quo* in order to preserve the embargo as a whole, and to prevent France from withdrawing from COCOM altogether. Of the other COCOM members, the French could accept covert discrimination against the PRC if there were substantial reductions in the embargo for the USSR and Eastern Europe. If COCOM was reformed on these lines, the UK would face greater Western competition for bloc markets, but on the other hand one source of contention in East-West relations - which Kosygin had complained about to Wilson - would be removed.[15]

Ministers approved the ESC(O)'s recommendations reversing the UK's decade-old policy against the China differential, and accepted the need to consult

[15] ESC(O)(67)3rd meeting, 16.5.67, **CAB134/2799**(PRO). ESC(67)9, *International Strategic Embargo - Review of Policy*, 6.6.67, **CAB134/2795**(PRO).

the French in advance and prepare for the 1968 review as applicable to the Soviet bloc alone.[16] During subsequent consultations, French officials stated that while they were unwilling to sponsor discriminatory measures against China, they would back a British initiative on this issue. Consultations with the Americans in October 1967 suggested that Washington could accept a compromise which retained existing restrictions on the PRC and preserved the strategic embargo. However, Washington's response to the Anglo-Soviet technological agreement of January 1968 showed that the compromise on COCOM was a fragile one. Dean informed London in early March that Pentagon officials and Congressmen opposed the agreement as the Soviets could by-pass the strategic embargo, and had hinted that Anglo-American co-operation in defence matters could suffer as a result. Greenhill retorted that the agreement did not violate COCOM's rules and was confined to civilian technical exchanges. Mintech was aware that the success of the agreement depended on reciprocity, while the main role in bilateral exchanges would be played by British businesses, who would not give away their industrial secrets to the Soviets for free.[17]

Wilson regarded American complaints concerning the technological agreement as absurd, and Foreign Office officials were privately convinced that Washington's concerns about Western security were superficial. Greenhill informed Dean in May that due to the importance of American assistance in defence matters, US concerns over the technological agreement had to be addressed on a

[16] ESC(67)3rd meeting, 12.7.67, **CAB134/2795**(PRO). Jay to PM, 15.6.67, **PREM13/1863**(PRO).
[17] Dean to Greenhill, 2.3.68, *DBPO III, I*, pp.28-30. Greenhill to Dean, 19.3.68, **FCO28/372**(PRO).

case-by-case basis. Yet he also suspected that once the Vietnam war was over, American computing firms like IBM would seek to break into the Eastern bloc market, and that in the short-term the USA had a commercial interest in restricting British sales of high-technology goods to the USSR and East European states.[18] As Bruce had noted, there was widespread feeling within Whitehall that American policy towards the strategic embargo was based on similar calculations, and these suspicions were expressed within the ESC and OPD in the months before the COCOM review in October 1968.

COCOM and Anglo-American relations: December 1967-August 1968.

Wilson retrospectively claimed that the Cabinet row over South African arms sales (December 1967) led him to propose a general review of trade policy after devaluation. He argued that if the embargo on arms sales to the *apartheid* regime was relaxed, then so too should the 'indefensible and anomalous restrictions on trade with Eastern Europe'. In this respect, the Prime Minister had an ally in Benn, who subsequently asserted that the UK had sacrificed opportunities to trade with bloc states because of its rigid adherence to COCOM's rules.[19] While there was widespread agreement within Whitehall that the strategic embargo should be relaxed, there was a prolonged debate throughout 1968 concerning the means by which this was to be achieved.

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[18] Conversation between PM and Zuckerman at No.10, 8.4.68, **PREM13/2405**(PRO). Greenhill to Dean, 15.5.68, **FCO28/373**(PRO).
[19] Wilson, *The Labour Government*, p.470. Benn, *Office Without Power*, author's note, pp.17-18.

Jay was removed from the Cabinet in August 1967 because he opposed EEC entry, and his successor as President of the Board of Trade, Anthony Crosland, supported both the liberalisation of trade with the Eastern bloc and the reform of COCOM. The ESC and the OPD endorsed the policy of promoting a 'China differential' and the relaxation of the embargo on the Soviet bloc in the forthcoming COCOM review, but Crosland intended to go further.[20] He recommended that Britain should propose firstly that the review should be rescheduled for June 1968, and secondly that changes to COCOM's rules should no longer require the unanimous consent of all member states. Crosland also argued that Britain should reserve the right to export items it believed should not be on the embargo lists, although COCOM would receive advance notification of any such case. The OPD debated these proposals on 21 March, with Stewart (who had replaced Brown as Foreign Secretary the previous week) leading the attack on Crosland's recommendations. Stewart argued that Crosland's proposals could bring about COCOM's collapse, with minimal benefits for British trade. The OPD overruled the President of the Board of Trade's first two recommendations, but the issue of unilaterally exporting embargoed items remained unresolved.[21]

In October 1967, the Americans had agreed in principle to a deal in which tighter restrictions on trade with China would be counter-balanced by fewer restrictions on the USSR and Eastern Europe, but were unclear as to what

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[20] See Pimlott, *Wilson*, p.468, on Crosland's appointment. ESC(68)1st meeting, 7.3.68, **CAB134/2796**(PRO). OPD(68)6th meeting, 21.3.68, **CAB148/35**(PRO).
[21] OPD(68)19, *International Strategic Embargo*, 14.3.68, **CAB148/36**(PRO). OPD(68)6th, **CAB148/35**(PRO).

practical form this arrangement would take. The British proposed to remove 21 items from the COCOM lists, 10 of which concerned both the PRC and the Soviet bloc. In discussions on the 7th and 22 May 1968, however, American officials proposed to add 58 items to the embargo lists, nearly all of which concerned China. There were further complications, the first being Japan's opposition to the proposed China differential. Although Tokyo did not recognise the PRC, the Japanese were unwilling to jeopardise their trade with China by endorsing an overt embargo which discriminated in favour of the USSR and its East European allies. The second problem arose when Sweden (which although not a member of COCOM had hitherto agreed to abide by its rules) proposed to remove restrictions on all exports to the Soviet bloc, with the exception of military goods. The British were alarmed by the Swedish action, which could encourage COCOM members to follow suit, and were exasperated by Japanese objections. A covert 'China differential', as proposed by Japan, would not satisfy British domestic opinion, and would also antagonise the Soviet bloc states. Both Wilson and Crosland remained committed to an overt 'differential' and envisaged the eventual collapse of the strategic embargo, or that Britain might have to withdraw from COCOM.[22]

During the summer of 1968, the issue of COCOM reform was complicated by the debate over computer sales to bloc states. One British firm, ICL, intended to export computers to the USSR and Romania. Benn argued that ICL's computers

[22] ESC(68)6, *International Strategic Embargo: Review of Policy*, 7.6.68; ESC(68)2nd meeting, 17.6.68, **CAB134/2796**(PRO). ESC(O)(68)5th, 25.6.68, **CAB134/2800**(PRO).

had a purely civilian application, but the DIS reported that their export could help the USSR bridge the technological gap separating the Eastern bloc from the West. Furthermore, as Dean noted, these computer sales would exacerbate American suspicions concerning the Anglo-Soviet technological agreement, and establish the impression that Britain was an unreliable ally. Within the ESC, the MoD and Foreign Office representatives argued that Washington could cripple British computer firms by blocking access to US-made components. In response, Mintech stated that France's dependence on American components had not prevented Paris from agreeing to a deal between Czechoslovakia and the French firm Machines Bull.[23] Mintech's position was similar to that adopted by the ambassadors to the Eastern bloc states at their bi-annual conference (7-10 May). Brimelow stated that he could not see 'how the sale of even the most advanced computers to the Soviet Union would increase the chances of Soviet aggression'. Harrison reminded his colleagues strategic embargo was being criticised by Ministers, MPs, and by businessmen, and that its rationale had been called into question because of the USSR's technological achievements, and due to 'scepticism about the present nature of the Soviet threat to our defence'. He concluded that the Soviets were only a few years behind Western technological developments, and that Moscow could easily buy, or steal, industrial secrets from Western companies to make good the difference. This was an accurate observation, as industrial espionage was one of the KGB's principal activities throughout the Cold War.[24]

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[23] ESC(68)9, *COCOM and Computers for Eastern Europe*, 28.6.68, **CAB134/2796**(PRO).
[24] Benn, *Office Without Power*, 10.7.68, p.89; & 1.8.68, pp.94-95. *Conference of HM Representatives in East European Countries. 7-10 May 1968*, 7th meeting, 10.5.68, **FCO28/45**(PRO). Andrew & Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive*, pp.244-247, p.553.

While Benn wanted to overrule US objections to computer sales, and both the Prime Minister and Crosland envisaged the collapse of COCOM, the majority opinion within the ESC(O) were unwilling to risk the disintegration of the strategic embargo. If the UK withdrew from COCOM, British firms would theoretically be well-placed to exploit the Eastern bloc market, but this advantage would soon be lost as other Western European powers would be expected to follow suit and denounce the embargo. In such an eventuality, the Soviets and Chinese would be in a position to exploit the collapse of COCOM and to build up their military and technological capabilities. Above all, British withdrawal from the strategic embargo would arouse American anger, jeopardising the bilateral co-operation in defence, nuclear and intelligence matters which was crucial to Britain's security interests.[25] As a consequence, the British government did not want to be seen to be threatening both the future of the embargo and alliance ties with the USA by taking unilateral action over COCOM. This issue remained unresolved as the crisis over internal reform in Czechoslovakia culminated in the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968.

Trade with the Eastern bloc and policy towards 'liberalisation': June 1967-August 1968.

Wilson's discussions with Kosygin in February 1967 forced the Board of Trade to prepare for Jay's negotiations with his opposite number, N. S. Patolichev, for a

[25] ESC(O)(68)6th meeting, 6.8.68, **CAB134/2800**(PRO). OPD(68)51, *Future of COCOM*, 10.7.68, **CAB148/38**(PRO).

long-term trade agreement. In the same way that the Prime Minister's intervention had cajoled the Foreign Office into treating seriously negotiations on a 'friendship treaty' with the Soviets, he also undermined the Board of Trade's established opposition to long-term commercial agreements with bloc states. Northern Department officials concluded that if such an agreement was concluded between the UK and USSR, the East Europeans would demand similar treatment. The Board of Trade, however, doubted whether the Soviets would treat trade negotiations with the British seriously, and considered the UK's potential bid for EEC membership as an additional obstacle. Apart from the USSR's opposition to European integration, existing agreements between EEC members and the CMEA states were due to end in 1969, after which the former were supposed to adopt a common policy on East-West trade. If Britain was accepted into the EEC, then any Anglo-Soviet trade agreement would require renegotiation.[26]

In May 1967, the Board of Trade proposed to extend the terms of liberalisation offered to the bloc states in 1964. This was partly because France, the FRG and other European competitors had removed most of their import quotas and - as shown by the ambassador's conference the previous year - there was also a widespread impression that Britain's competitors had the upper hand in trading with the Eastern bloc states. Board of Trade officials proposed to offer unilateral liberalisation to the East European states, including Romania (which rejected the UK's terms in 1964) and the GDR (which was exempt from the

[26] B. Crowe (Economic Relations Dept), 24.2.67; Smith to G. McMahon (BoT), 13.3.67; Rhodes to J. Fish (BoT), 20.2.67; & Fish to Rhodes, 22.2.67, **FCO28/59**(PRO).

previous liberalisation offer). These proposals were approved in principle by the inter-departmental Commercial Policy Committee in June 1967, but the subsequent devaluation crisis delayed implementation of liberalisation.[27] The Commercial Policy Committee had excluded both China and the USSR from the terms of liberalisation. In the latter's case, this decision was due to the impact of the Cultural Revolution, while as far as the USSR was concerned, Wilson's optimistic expectations following Kosygin's visit had not materialised. Moscow had rejected the BMC and Leyland offers and showed no interest in liberalisation during Jay's visit to the USSR in April. The Soviets were perceived to be, in the words of one Moscow embassy official, 'hard bargainers' who tended 'to pocket concessions and ask for more'.[28]

By December 1967, the inter-departmental discussions on trade liberalisation had stalled, mainly because the ministries involved were distracted by the impact of devaluation. During the spring of 1968, the argument on unilateral liberalisation of Eastern bloc imports shifted in favour of the argument that Britain's West European rivals would dominate the East European market if import restrictions were not lifted. The official Commercial Policy Committee finally agreed to 'unilateral' liberalisation not only for the four bloc states who had originally agreed to 'conditional' liberalisation - Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland - but for East Germany, Romania and the USSR as well.[29] However,

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[27] Kronsten, 'East-West Trade', pp.265-181. CCP(67)17; *East-West Trade Policy*, 31.5.67. CCP(67)8th meeting, 7.6.67, **FCO28/59**.
[28] CCP(67)14, *Anglo-Soviet Trade*, 18.5.67, **FCO28/429**(PRO). CCP(67)11th meeting, 18.7.67; & J. Bullard (Moscow) to McMahon, 14.6.67, **FCO28/430**(PRO).
[29] C. Lucas (Treasury) to G. MacMahon (BoT), 5.2.68; & PCO(68)5th meeting, 24.4.68, **FCO28/60**(PRO).

Crosland was reluctant to include the GDR due to East German harassment of West Berlin, which imposed a further delay. The problem of when to introduce liberalisation, and concerning which bloc states would be included, was also unresolved as the crisis in Eastern Europe over the 'Prague Spring' reached its climax.[30]

Conclusions.

Political relations between London and Moscow deteriorated in the aftermath of Kosygin's visit to the UK, but the Wilson government was determined not to curtail trade with the Soviet bloc, and the technological agreement concluded in January 1968 remained sacrosanct. This was partly due to the UK's traditional readiness to keep politics and business separate, but also due to Britain's dependence on overseas trade and the need to restore its balance of payments deficit. The trading contacts established by other Western European states with the Eastern bloc were regarded with jealousy by the UK, which was uneasy at its inferior economic performance in comparison with its competitors. Yet there were political as well as purely commercial reasons underpinning British trade policy towards the Eastern bloc. East-West commerce was a means of promoting the long-term evolution of Eastern Europe from dogmatic Communist orthodoxy, thus helping to overcome East-West tensions and develop *détente*. Wilson (like Eden and Macmillan before him) also wished to produce tangible results from his

[30] Comments by C. Giffard & T. Garvey, 24.5.68; & G. Roberts to Crosland, 24.5.68, **FCO28/60**(PRO).

contacts with the Soviet leadership. As was the case with the 'friendship treaty', the Prime Minister made his interests in developing commercial contacts with the USSR clear.

However, in the same way that the 'friendship treaty' was a non-starter, bilateral contacts between London and Moscow failed to produce the 'striking new initiative' in trading relations that the Prime Minister wanted. By the end of 1967 there was still a significant imbalance of bilateral trade in the USSR's favour - Britain had imported £123.5 millions worth of Soviet goods, while in return the USSR had purchased British goods worth a mere £64.2 million.[31] The strategic embargo affected the development of Anglo-Soviet trade, particularly in computers, and British officials felt that there were limits to which the UK could not go as far as technological transfers were concerned. Both Wilson and the Foreign Office dismissed American complaints concerning the agreement concluded by Benn and Kirillin, but British officials were unwilling to risk a major breach with the USA over COCOM, in case Washington cut off defence and intelligence links with London in response. It should be noted that British policy towards the strategic embargo was also affected by other COCOM members - France and Japan had, at certain points, posed problems with regards to the 'China differential'. Nonetheless, the lack of progress in Anglo-Soviet commercial relations paralleled the deterioration of political relations between the two powers in 1967-1968, the course of which will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

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[31] PC(68)27, *Trade with Eastern Europe in relation to events in Czechoslovakia*, 3.9.68, **FCO28/61**(PRO).

CHAPTER 7: BRITISH DEFENCE POLICY AND THE SOVIET 'THREAT'. MARCH 1967- JANUARY 1968.

It was during the Wilson government's term in office that Britain shed itself of its East of Suez commitments, concentrating on the defence of Europe. The March 1966 defence review reduced British forces committed to the Eastern Mediterranean and announced that the base in Aden, the scene of an anti-British insurgency, would be abandoned by 1968. The conclusion of the 'confrontation' with Indonesia in August 1966 enabled London to withdraw the bulk of the 50,000-strong force committed to the defence of Malaysia.[1] In March 1967, the OPD decided to withdraw all British forces from the Persian Gulf and South-East Asia (excluding Hong Kong), with half pulled out by 1970-1971 and a complete withdrawal by 1975-1976. After the devaluation of the pound the Cabinet decided in January 1968 that the military withdrawal would be completed by December 1971.[2] The Americans and other regional allies, notably the Australians, were already alarmed by the British withdrawal from South-East Asia, and London's decision to accelerate this process caused outrage in Washington and Canberra.[3] Over a decade later, critics argued that the East of Suez withdrawals created a power vacuum for the Soviets to exploit, and that by reducing defence expenditure and commitments on purely financial grounds 'the Labour government chose to

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[1] Easter, *British Defence Policy*, pp.392-399, pp.413-416. According to Cmnd.3203, *Statement on the Defence Estimates*, (HMSO, February 1967), in early 1967 British forces in the Far East stood at 51,800, including 37,300 troops. In comparison, the UK had 63,460 personnel in Central Europe, with 55,700 troops committed to BAOR and Berlin. 20,300 servicemen were committed to the Mediterranean and 20,850 to the Middle East.
[2] OPD(67)14th meeting, 22.3.67, **CAB148/30**(PRO).CC6(68)6th & CC7(68)7th conclusions,12.1.68, **CAB128/43**(PRO).
[3] Washington to FO, No.54, 11.1.68, **CAB129/35**(PRO). T. Petersen, 'Crossing the Rubicon ? Britain's withdrawal from the Middle East', in *International History Review* (2000), p.318, p.339.

ignore an increasingly obvious fact that Soviet Russia was mounting a global threat which would soon effectively outflank NATO in Europe'.[4]

The defence cuts and the shedding of commitments was a result of Britain's grave financial difficulties, and in the East of Suez withdrawals were the culmination of the long-term retreat of British power in the post-war era. The traditional anti-colonialist sentiment of Labour politicians also played a part, particularly with regards to the withdrawal from Aden. It is worth noting that during the defence reviews the principal challenges to British and Western interests cited were China, in addition to regional adversaries such as Indonesia. The USSR was hardly referred to as a potential strategic threat, the exception being the anonymous participant at the second Chequers conference (13-14 June 1965) who warned that a withdrawal from the Middle East would be followed by 'widespread disorders' which would interrupt Western oil supplies and enable the Soviets to extend their influence in the region. Since 1955, the USSR had used transfers of high-technology weaponry - tanks, warplanes and conventional missiles - to clients such as Egypt and Indonesia as a means of extending its influence overseas. MoD officials were concerned with the supply of Soviet arms to Egypt, Iraq and Indonesia, but Healey's proposal for a multilateral 'agreement to limit the export of sophisticated weapons' to Third World powers was unrealistic, given Moscow's use of military aid to enhance political influence.[5]

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[4] M. Chichester & J. Wilkinson, *The Uncertain Ally: British Defence Policy 1960-1990*, (Aldershot; Gower Publishing 1982), p.28. P. Kennedy offers a less strident critique in *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, (3rd edition, HarperCollins 1991), pp.393-398.

[5] MISC17/5th meeting on defence, 13.6.65, **CAB130/213**(PRO). OPD(O)(65)37(Revise): *Defence Expenditure Review*, 2.6.65, **CAB148/43**(PRO).

This chapter will firstly examine British (and American) assessments of the USSR's military capabilities, not only with reference to the Warsaw Pact forces facing NATO, but also regarding the development of Soviet maritime power and of Moscow's policy towards the Third World. Secondly, it will discuss the political factors which encouraged the Labour government, which had initially favoured a reduction of the British commitment to NATO, to focus its defence policy on Europe. The final section analyses the impact of the Six Day War (June 1967) between Israel and its Arab neighbours, a conflict in which the USSR played an ambiguous role. In its conclusions, this chapter will assess what impact, if any, the East of Suez withdrawals had on East-West rivalries, and as to whether, by deciding to end Britain's 'world role' the Wilson government underestimated, or ignored, the perceived Soviet threat.

British and American assessments of Soviet military capabilities: 1967-1968.

During the 1960s the USSR built up its nuclear arsenal in order to achieve strategic parity with the USA. The Soviets also sought to develop their conventional military power and to expand their naval capabilities.[6] However, the USSR faced an emerging strategic from China. While Wilson was impressed by

[6] Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p.19. Nation, *Red Star*, p.261. B. Ranft & G. Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, (Annapolis Ma; Naval Institute Press 1989), pp.53-54.

Kosygin's overtly anti-Chinese attitude during his visit to London,[7] Johnson's officials were likewise aware of what Foy Kohler (serving as Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs) called 'the profound fear and hostility all Russians feel towards China'. Kohler attributed this sentiment to the Sino-Soviet border dispute and ethnocentric fears of invasion from the East, and Walt Rostow retrospectively commented on the alarm the Chinese nuclear programme aroused amongst the Soviet party at the Glassboro summit.[8] The excesses associated with the Cultural Revolution worried not only Moscow, but Washington and London too. The JIC had concluded in April 1966 that China was unlikely to risk war with either the USA or USSR, but the Cultural Revolution strengthened the British impression of the PRC as an unpredictable threat. The Hong Kong riots in the summer of 1967 and the sacking of the British mission in Beijing by 'Red Guards' led officials in Whitehall to question whether Mao Zedong could control the revolutionary extremism he had unleashed.[9] Although the Cultural Revolution was considered to be in a 'diminishing stage' by November 1967, this internal upheaval reinforced the American and British perception of China as a potentially irrational and more dangerous power than the Soviet Union.[10]

British intelligence assessments concluded that despite the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, the bulk of the USSR's armed forces were still committed to

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[7] Roberts, *Soviet Union*, p.56. PM to Johnson, T22/67, 7.2.67, **PREM13/1917**(PRO).
[8] Conversation between Kohler & M. Stewart (UK Embassy) at State Department, 22.1.67, **MF409**. Transcript, Walt. W. Rostow Oral History Interview, 21.3.69, p.59, LBJLIB. Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, p.247.
[9] COS22nd/66, 26.4.66, **DEFE4/199**(PRO). Trend to PM, 24.5.67, **PREM13/1458**(PRO).
[10] J. Bushell (UKDelNATO) to D. C. Wilson (Far Eastern Dept), 30.11.67, **FCO21/24**(PRO). JIC(67)40th, 7.9.67, **CAB159/47**(PRO). On the course of the 'Cultural Revolution', see W. Rodzinski, *The Walled Kingdom*, (London; Fontana Press 1988), pp.416-428.

Europe. According to DIS estimates, at the beginning of 1967 the USSR had 13 front-line divisions in the Far East, with another 11 stationed in Central Asia (a total of about 238,000 troops). By contrast, the Soviets maintained about 58 divisions of 748,000 troops in the military districts of the Western USSR, with a further 20 divisions (285,000 troops) in the GDR, 4 divisions in Hungary and 2 in Poland. These figures made no reference to the strength and readiness of these divisions, but it was clear that the bulk of Soviet military power was directed towards Europe.[11] JIC estimates depicted the Soviet army as 'the largest modern army in the world', with the bulk of its manpower in 'small, but mostly armoured and mobile, line divisions'. Although Soviet military doctrine stipulated that any East-West war would begin with an all-out nuclear exchange (and despite the expansion of the USSR's tactical nuclear stockpile), Soviet military theory was beginning to envisage the possibility of conventional operations. The JIC also noted that the combat capabilities of the East European armed forces, in particular those of the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia, had improved during the past decade. By the late 1960s, the WTO member states possessed more sophisticated weaponry and improved logistical support, although ultimately their forces were firmly integrated with those of the USSR and incapable of independent action. Nonetheless, it was evident to Britain and other NATO powers that the Warsaw Pact had during its first decade transformed itself from a 'cardboard castle'

[11] *NATO Expert Working Group on Soviet Policy. Soviet Policy May-October 1967. United Kingdom Contribution*, 2.11.67, **FCO28/25**(PRO). DIS memorandum, *Order of Battle - Soviet Ground Forces*, 25.1.67, **FCO28/455**(PRO).

derided by Western analysts into a fully-functioning and powerful military alliance.[12]

American assessments likewise concluded that the bulk of the USSR's military power was still directed towards Europe, and likewise noted the qualitative improvements in the Warsaw Pact's forces, with particular reference to armour, artillery and tactical air-power.[13] Washington was nonetheless aware that the PRC posed a long-term threat to the USSR's security. US estimates reported that by the end of 1967 Soviet forces facing China had grown from 15 to 21 divisions, and that while neither Moscow nor Beijing intended a complete breach, 'so long as the Sino-Soviet conflict persists Soviet military planners will have to consider [both] the possibility of large-scale war with China and China's emerging strategic nuclear capabilities'.[14]

The Foreign Office considered it inevitable that the USSR would, like any major power, seek to extend its influence overseas. One Moscow embassy analysis of Soviet foreign policy, drafted in September 1966, noted that for reasons of *Realpolitik*, the Soviets had to deal with independent-minded Third World leaders such as the Egyptian President, Gamal Abdul Nasser. The USSR also faced competition from China and (in Latin America) Cuba, both of which were more

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[12] JIC(67)3, *Soviet Bloc War Potential*, 16.2.67, **CAB158/65**(PRO); & JIC(68)1, *Periodic Intelligence Summary for NATO Commands*, 1.6.68, **CAB158/68**(PRO). Mastny, 'In a Bind', pp.231-232. Appendix 5 summarises estimates regarding the deployment of Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces prior to August 1968.
[13] NIE11-14-67, *The Soviet and East European General Purpose Forces*, 16.11.67, **RG263**, 190, 28, 16-17, NARAII. W. Odom, *The collapse of the Soviet Military*, (Yale University Press 1998), pp.72-73. A. & J. Seaton, *The Soviet Army*, (London; Bodley Head 1986), pp.192-193, pp.194-199.
[14] P. Jessup to W. Rostow, 27.1.67, *FRUS XXX*, pp.512-523; & note p.644. NIE11-4-67, *Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy*, 20.7.67, **MFF15-422**.

inclined towards instigating revolution in the underdeveloped world. Moreover, the extent of Soviet influence was restricted by rivalries between the non-aligned states - the USSR could not, for example, improve relations with India without alienating Pakistan.[15] In Bonn the following April one Assistant Under-Secretary, Peter Hayman, informed West German officials that the Soviets were 'first of all motivated by a nationalist desire to avoid problems on their borders', hence their mediation between India and Pakistan at Tashkent, and that their intervention elsewhere was selective. The USSR had not meddled in Rhodesia, but was far more involved in the Middle East.[16]

British officials observed that the Soviet leadership, in particular Brezhnev, intended to build up the USSR's conventional forces, and to develop its capacity to intervene overseas and counter the USA's superior global military capability.[17] The CIA's analysts were at odds with the Pentagon in their assessments of the USSR's military build-up. Like the JIC's estimates, the former stated that while the Soviet armed forces were more mobile, especially in terms of air transport and maritime power, Moscow would rather manipulate indigenous proxies than risk a direct confrontation with the USA by employing Soviet military power overseas. The Vietnam war had demonstrated that the USSR was still, unlike its superpower rival, unable 'to apply its conventional power effectively to areas beyond' the frontiers of the Soviet bloc. American military intelligence sources, however, argued

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[15] H. Matthews (Moscow) to Brown, 17.9.66, NS1022/59, **FO371/188906**(PRO).
[16] C. Barclay (IRD), *Communist Activities in Africa*, 14.2.66, **FO371/188487**(PRO). SC(67)17, 6.3.67, **FCO49/58**(PRO). *Anglo-German talks on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 20-21 April 1967*, 1st meeting, 20.4.67, **FCO29/29**(PRO).
[17] *Soviet Policy May-October 1967*, **FCO28/25**(PRO). JIC(65)64, *Soviet Intervention Capability*, 27.6.66, **CAB158/59**(PRO).

that the Soviet military build-up was intended to support 'the aggressive pursuit of [Moscow's] objectives' across the globe.[18]

Like the CIA, British military and intelligence analysts took a more sanguine view of the emergence of the USSR as a maritime power. The increased Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean region, was regarded partly as a response to US *Polaris* submarine patrols and also as part of the USSR's attempt to enhance its prestige with its Arab allies. The Soviets had regularly deployed naval forces in the Mediterranean since 1964, but did not have the capabilities or the bases needed for extended operations in wartime. Soviet maritime activity served a political rather than a military purpose, the USSR's objective being, in the words of one CIA estimate, to forge an alliance 'between the "socialist camp" and a broad front of revolutionary forces to constrict and weaken the world position of the Western powers' in the Mediterranean region. However, the USSR could not establish permanent bases in the region without raising tensions with the Western world and damaging its 'anti-imperialist' credentials, and so the Soviets provided Arab clients such as Algeria, Egypt and Syria with arms and used them as proxies.[19] The political and prestige factors behind the Soviet naval build-up in the Mediterranean have been cited in recent studies.[20] Nevertheless, by associating itself with the 'progressive' Arab regimes the USSR risked embroilment in the volatile

[18] NIE11-4-67, **MFF15-422**. CIA memorandum, *Soviet Military Policy in 1967*, 14.6.67, **MF343**.
[19] DIS report DI4(N)119, *The Soviet Naval Presence in the Mediterranean*, 1.1.67, **FCO28/455**(PRO). JIC(67)11, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East and North Africa and their likely development*, 21.3.67, **CAB158/66**(PRO). NIE11-6-67, *Soviet Strategy and Intentions in the Mediterranean Basin*, 1.6.67, **RG263**, 190, 28, 16-17.
[20] Ranft & Till, *Soviet Strategy*, p.56. p.86. Odom, *Soviet Military*, pp.80-81.

Arab-Israel conflict, the potential consequences of which were shown by the outbreak of the Six Day War (June 1967).

Britain regarded the expansion of Soviet maritime capabilities as part of the USSR's intention to demonstrate its prestige as a superpower. The JIC, MoD and Foreign Office's assessments also concluded, correctly, that the bulk of the Soviet armed forces was deployed facing the NATO powers. Given the fragile state of the Alliance after de Gaulle's actions in March 1966 and the offsets crisis,[21] the Labour government had sound strategic reasons for reversing its initial intention to reduce the UK's military presence in Europe in order to concentrate on the East of Suez role. Yet there were also political factors which led Wilson and his Ministers to focus on the continent in the spring of 1967.

Turning towards Europe: April-December 1967.

The first of these factors was the collective mood of the Cabinet concerning the future orientation of British foreign policy. Brown was a firm supporter of EEC entry, and during the July 1966 sterling crisis he was quoted by Castle on the need to 'pull the troops out: all of them. I don't want them out of Germany. I want them out of East of Suez'. Having initially supported Britain's 'world role', Healey also favoured greater involvement in European defence matters by the spring of 1967. Wilson, who had hitherto shared the Labour left's hostility to

[21] Gavin, 'Flexible Response', pp.865-866.

European integration, was a firm advocate of EEC entry by January 1967.[22] Roy Jenkins' appointment as Chancellor in December 1967 reinforced this pro-European trend.[23] It would be incorrect to argue that there was a clear Europe-East of Suez split in the Cabinet - in the bitter debate on defence in January 1968 Brown spoke out against accelerating the abandonment of the UK's overseas commitments. Nonetheless, when the Wilson government was forced in the aftermath of devaluation to chose between ending the world role or withdrawing troops from NATO, Ministers opted for the former.[24]

The second factor concerned the souring of Anglo-American relations, the catalyst being the failure of the *Sunflower* initiative in February. While Washington was dismayed by the East of Suez withdrawals and the devaluation of the pound, the Wilson government was worried by the escalation of the Vietnam war and the administration's decision to develop a 'thin' ABM force to counter a future Chinese nuclear threat. Healey quarrelled with McNamara over the ABM decision at the NATO summit in Ankara (September 1967).[25] The feeling that the Johnson administration was acting recklessly over Vietnam and ABMs paradoxically coexisted with concerns that the USA would disengage from European defence. Patrick Dean informed Brown that many officials and Congressmen were angered by the lack of support from the USA's allies regarding Vietnam. The ambassador to Washington also concluded that the Johnson administration believed that the

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[22] Brown is quoted by Castle, *Diaries*, 18.7.66, p.148. Catteral (ed.), 'East of Suez', pp.636-637. Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.434-435, pp.437-442.
[23] Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, (Macmillan 1991), p.172.
[24] CC6(68)6th-7th conclusions, **CAB128/43**(PRO).
[25] Palliser to MacLehose, 28.4.67, **PREM13/1455**(PRO). Brown & E. Rostow at FO, **FCO7/767**(PRO). Healey, *Time of My Life*, pp.312-313.

USA could have a 'stable, working relationship' with the USSR, and that while the Americans would not abandon their NATO allies, in the NPT negotiations in particular the US objective was to gain Soviet agreement to a draft text, and then approach the West Europeans, rather than the reverse. The West Germans were even more concerned that the USA would seek agreement with the USSR at its expense.[26] As far as Anglo-American relations was concerned, for all the tensions concerning Vietnam and missile defences Britain remained committed to maintaining NATO and concerned at the implications of significant US troop withdrawals from Europe. However, by January 1968 the majority of Ministers were less ready to heed US protests concerning the East of Suez withdrawals and devaluation, concurring with Wilson's statement that 'both we and the United States should recognise, especially now that we were both seeking to eliminate our external deficits, that we each look after our own interests'.[27]

In April 1967 the Wilson government committed itself to make another bid for EEC entry (the first being Macmillan's abortive effort in 1961). Ministers were aware that the 'decline' of British influence overseas had been demonstrated by Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) and the Tashkent summit.[28] To the chagrin of the Labour left, Britain had 'to a substantial extent felt bound to follow the policies of the United States', notably in South-East Asia. The Cabinet's discussions on the 30 April echoed the debates within the Attlee government between the 'Atlanticist' and 'Third force' schools of thought, with

[26] Dean to Brown, 23.1.67, **FCO7/767**(PRO). Gavin, 'Flexible Response', pp.869-870.
[27] CC6(68)6th conclusions, **CAB128/43**.
[28] OPD(65)40th meeting, 22.9.65, **CAB148/18**(PRO). CC2(66)2nd meeting, 20.1.66, **CAB128/41**(PRO).

some Ministers arguing that if Britain remained outside the EEC Western Europe 'would become increasingly estranged' from the USA. An alternative argument was that Britain's involvement in the EEC could 'provide the political stimulus formerly given by our imperial role', and that the consequences of remaining outside the Community would be disastrous:

> We must not in any event allow ourselves to become totally dependent on the United States nor on the other hand could we contemplate aligning our policies with the Soviet bloc: joining the [EEC] was essential if we were to avoid finding ourselves increasingly isolated and powerless in world affairs.[29]

Throughout 1967, London sought to improve relations with Bonn, partly in order to ensure West German approval for British membership of the EEC, but also to encourage Kiesinger and the Foreign Minister, Willy Brandt, to improve the FRG's relations with the East Europeans. The Foreign Office applauded the new Chancellor's offer to open diplomatic relations with the bloc states (13 December 1966), describing the renunciation of the Hallstein doctrine as a 'refreshingly sensible and far-sighted' action. Two years previously, Northern Department officials had considered consultations with their West German counterparts on Eastern bloc developments to be 'a waste of time', but by May 1967 Anglo-German consultations on East-West relations were considered necessary 'in order to avoid being at cross purposes with an ally whose support and understanding we need as much as they need ours'. However, there were limits to which the Kiesinger government was prepared to risk the FRG's ties with France. One factor behind Erhard's downfall in late 1966 was that a sizeable faction within his party,

[29] CC26(67)26th conclusions, 30.4.67, **CAB128/42**(PRO).

the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), regarded him as excessively pro-American. The tensions between the CDU's 'Gaullists' and 'Atlanticists' also affected the policies of the 'Grand Coalition', where the Social Democratic Party (SPD) coexisted with Kiesinger's CDU. In this respect, any improvement in Anglo-German relations would could for little, as de Gaulle remained opposed to British entry to the EEC.[30]

One consequence of the policy of mending fences with Bonn was that London adopted a lower profile in NPT negotiations. As noted above, Britain had been excluded from US-Soviet discussions on non-proliferation in the autumn of 1966, but West German and Italian complaints at the supposedly discriminatory nature of an NPT placed the UK in a dilemma, as British interests in non-proliferation conflicted with London's unwillingness to antagonise two states which supported Britain's membership of the EEC. This dilemma, in addition to American unwillingness to involve the West Europeans in non-proliferation negotiations with the USSR, explains why the UK played a minimal role in promoting the NPT, despite the fact that the Labour government had initially declared non-proliferation to be a policy priority.[31] In addition, the Wilson government also modified its position on offsetting BAOR's foreign exchange costs. The trilateral negotiations ended on 27-28 April, with the UK being permitted to redeploy one brigade from BAOR and one squadron from the RAF contingent in Germany. In return, the

[30] Note by Fretwell, 5.1.65; & Smith to A. Stark (Bonn), 15.1.65, N1072/1, **FO371/182509**(PRO). Stark to Hayman, 1.5.67; & Smith to Hayman, 19.5.67, **FCO28/29**(PRO). Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe*, pp.182-186. pp.350-351

[31] Freeman, *Arms Control*, p.236. Nuti, *Transatlantic relations*, p.26.

Labour government surrendered its objective of forcing Bonn to pay for all of BAOR's foreign exchange costs. The Americans were also permitted to 'rotate' 2 army brigades and 96 warplanes back to the USA, rather than the 2 complete divisions that McNamara had envisaged.[32] The outcome of the trilateral negotiations had more to do with intra-alliance politics than military strategy. There was a clear danger that NATO would 'unravel', and as such neither the British nor the Americans could make troop cuts to the extent originally intended.[33]

In the same way that the trilateral talks represented a compromise solution, the eventual outcome of the NATO strategic review, following the adoption of MC14/3 in December 1967, effectively ratified existing force levels. As Beatrice Heuser argues, MC14/3's doctrine of a 'symmetrical response' to any WTO attacks, of 'controlled escalation' and of delaying an all-out nuclear response to Soviet aggression was similar to the strategic concepts expressed by the COS and MoD officials. MC14/3 ruled out a conventional forces build-up which no NATO power, including the USA, was prepared to undertake.[34] However, as Brown informed the OPD in July 1967, there was a danger that Belgium, Canada, and the USA could reduce their force contributions. Given Wilson's earlier concerns for West German military preponderance in the continent, it was ironic that a

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[32] According to Zimmerman, in 1969 Bonn agreed to purchase civil and military goods from the UK to offset 80% of BAOR's costs. The last Anglo-German offset agreement was in 1971. See Zimmerman, 'Sour Fruits', p.235. CC26(67)26th conclusions, 30.4.67, **CAB128/42**(PRO). OPD(67)24th meeting, 26.6.67, **CAB148/30**(PRO). Final report on trilateral talks, (undated), *FRUS XIII*, pp.562-570.

[33] Gavin, 'Flexible Response', pp.866-871. Dockrill, *East of Suez*, pp.228-229.

[34] Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France & FRG*, pp.52-54. Stromseth, *Flexible Response*, pp.175-182. Bluth, 'Reconciling the Irreconcilable', pp.97-98.

reduction of the *Bundeswehr* was also likely. Kosygin had made it clear that the Soviets were disinterested in force reductions in Central Europe, so BAOR could not be cut back further without jeopardising both NATO's integrity and the UK's security. In response to the Foreign Secretary's arguments, the OPD conceded that the best means of offsetting BAOR's foreign exchange costs was increased bilateral co-operation with the West Germans in defence-related research and development.[35]

For a combination of economic, political and strategic reasons, the Wilson government gradually shifted from a defence policy supporting a 'world role' to a strategy focused on European defence and NATO. As noted above, the OPD decided in March 1967 upon a complete military withdrawal from 'East of Suez' by 1976. However, the furious debate which preceded the decision in January 1968 to accelerate the withdrawal showed that some Ministers felt that Britain could afford to retain its global commitments into the mid-1970s. Wilson subsequently blamed the devaluation crisis - which made further reductions in defence necessary - on the economic impact of the Six Day War (5-11 June 1967).[36] While this argument paints a rosy picture of Labour's management of the economy, the circumstances in which Israel and its Arab enemies went to war contributed to British and American perceptions of the USSR's involvement in the Middle East.

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[35] OPD(67)28th meeting, 28.7.67, **CAB148/30**(PRO). F. Roberts (Bonn) to Brown, 13.7.67, **PREM13/1526**(PRO).
[36] Wilson, *Labour Government*, pp.415.

The Six Day War and Western views of Soviet policy: June-November 1967.

The immediate cause of the Six Day War was Nasser's expulsion of the UN peace-keeping force (UNEF) from Sinai in May, following which Egypt closed the Gulf of Aqaba, imposing a partial blockade on Israel. The Soviet role in the ensuing crisis was, as one historian comments, 'contradictory'. Moscow had inspired Nasser's actions by disseminating false reports of Israeli mobilisation against Syria, but as Israel's neighbours prepared for war the Soviets then sought to restrain their clients and denied them further arms supplies.[37] It was due to this apparent confusion that Soviet intentions acquired three distinct contemporary interpretations. The more hard-line view was that the USSR was exploiting Washington's embroilment in Vietnam by triggering a war in the Middle East. This conflict would provoke US intervention, thus dissipating American power and enhancing the USSR's political standing in the Arab world. This was essentially the Israeli view and was shared by some officials within the Johnson administration where, as Dean observed, a 'harder and more suspicious line' on Soviet intentions was emerging.[38] A slightly less hostile variant of this interpretation, expressed by Rusk, the CIA and British diplomats, was that the USSR had an interest in promoting continued Arab-Israeli tensions, but had expected neither Nasser's expulsion of UNEF nor the threat of a war which could

[37] A. Bregman & J. El-Tahri, *The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs*, (Penguin 1998), pp.61-63, pp.64-65. G. Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press 1991), p.58, pp.61-63.
[38] Memorandum of conversation between Levi Eshkol (Israeli PM) & PM at 10 Downing St, 17.1.68, **PREM13/2213**(PRO). Dean to Brown, 12.5.67, **FCO15/667**(PRO).

embroil the two super-powers.[39] A third view was shared by Wilson and Brown, who were aware of the Soviet role in provoking the crisis, but placed greater emphasis on Kosygin's assertion that the USSR did not want a Middle Eastern war and would 'do all in [its] power to prevent conflict in the area'.[40]

De Gaulle proposed a quadripartite conference to discuss the Middle-Eastern crisis, and the Foreign Secretary sought Soviet support for the French initiative during his visit to Moscow in May. Brown informed Cabinet colleagues that the USSR did not want a war in the Middle East, but Gromyko made it clear to him that the Soviet leadership would not assist any Western power, including France, in efforts at diplomatic mediation.[41] Gore-Booth observed that while the Soviets were unlikely to intervene militarily in any conflict, they had 'taken a highly partisan line' and were encouraging anti-Western feeling amongst the Arabs. Britain could not tolerate a diplomatic and strategic triumph for Egypt and its Soviet ally, but Wilson and his Cabinet were aware that military intervention would have the same dire results as the Suez invasion of 1956.[42] The Americans faced a similar dilemma, sharpened by the ongoing war in Vietnam, which remained unresolved until Israel launched a pre-emptive attack on Egypt on 5 June. The ensuing war ended on the 11th with a decisive Israeli victory over Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

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[39] NIE30-67, *The Arab-Israeli Dispute: Current Phase*, 13.4.67, in *FRUS XVIII*. D. Murray to Palliser, 28.5.67, **PREM13/1618**(PRO). Washington to FO, No.1949-1950, 6.6.67, **PREM13/1620**(PRO).
[40] FO to Washington, N.5505, 28.5.67; & Moscow to FO, No.870, 24.5.67, **PREM13/1618**(PRO).
[41] Conversation between Brown, Gromyko & Kosygin in Kremlin, 24.5.67, *Visit of the Foreign Secretary to the Soviet Union*, **FCO28/406**(PRO). Moscow to FO, No.885, 25.5.67, **PREM13/1618**(PRO). CC32(67)32nd conclusions, 25.5.67, **CAB128/42**(PRO).
[42] Note by Gore-Booth, 24.5.67, **PREM13/1618**(PRO). CC33(67)33rd conclusions, 30.5.67, **CAB128/42**(PRO).

The consensus in Whitehall was that, as Harrison informed Brown, the Soviets had blundered badly, expecting 'a political and diplomatic victory' for their Arab allies rather than an Israeli military triumph. Although Moscow had provoked the crisis by its reports of Israeli mobilisation, the USSR did not expect the Egyptians to expel UNEF and close the Gulf of Aqaba. Furthermore, the Soviets' 'total underestimation of Israel's capabilities and over-estimation of the Arabs' has left them in a position where their protégés have been disastrously defeated without their lifting a finger'. Egyptian propaganda allegations that Israel's victory was due to Anglo-American military intervention (the 'big lie') paradoxically highlighted the USSR's failure to protect its Egyptian and Syrian allies. As a consequence of their embarrassment, the Soviets would recoup their influence in the region by supporting the Arab cause in the UN and by replenishing the arsenals of their clients. The ambassador to Moscow was also concerned that the USSR's contradictory policies before and during the war were due to an internal dispute within the Kremlin between the proponents of 'co-existence' and those who favoured harder 'anti-imperialist' policies (Harrison suggested that Alexander Shelepin could be included in this faction), and that the debacle in the Middle East would serve to strengthen the latter.[43]

Howard Smith responded that although a faction of the CPSU could be concerned that 'the Soviet Union had lost its sense of mission and that the path

[43] OPD(O)(67)5th meeting, 16.6.67, **CAB148/80**(PRO). Moscow to FO, No.1005, 10.6.67, **FCO28/31**(PRO). Harrison to Brown, *The Soviet Role in the Middle East Crisis*, 20.7.67, **PREM13/1622**(PRO).

of ideological rectitude must be followed', the leadership would still avoid any 'policy which could carry serious risks of nuclear confrontation with the USA', although Moscow could follow a 'harder line' towards the West as a result of the war. The head of the Northern Department suggested that the Soviets perceived that it was the 'imperialists' who had the upper hand in international politics, a judgement reinforced by the Vietnam war, American intervention in the Dominican Republic (April 1965), the purge of the PKI (September 1965), the Greek military coup (April 1967) and the Six Day War. Subsequent Foreign Office assessments concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that there was any split within the Soviet leadership, and that while the USSR was rearming its clients and increasing its naval presence in the Mediterranean, the extent of Soviet aid would be tempered by Moscow's interest in averting another Middle Eastern war and a clash with the Americans. Officials also concluded that states like Egypt had an interest in preserving links with the West, and would avoid excessive dependence on Soviet aid.[44]

Although Johnson had attempted to avert the pre-emptive Israeli attack, Dean reported that due to concerns in Washington over the growth of Egyptian and Soviet influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, Israel's actions were 'probably not entirely unwelcome to a number of officials here'. The ambassador to Washington reported that the Americans considered that 'the Russians have not really made up their minds on where to go from here in the Middle East'.

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[44] Smith to Lord Hood, 26.7.67, **FCO28/33**(PRO). *NATO Middle East Experts Meeting 14-17 November 1967; & 13-17 May 1968. United Kingdom Contribution*, **FCO17/14**(PRO).

Llewelyn Thompson predicted that US-Soviet relations would suffer as a result of the war, and Dean found him to be 'depressed and sombre, though by no means panicky'.[45] Kohler commented that the Soviets had been in 'black despair' following the Israeli victory but had recovered some prestige by re-arming the Egyptians and Syrians. The USSR's dilemma was that it had to 'stick with the Arabs to hurt the West', but the Arab-Israeli feud was 'hard to control', and could deteriorate into a superpower confrontation. Regarding Harrison's comments on the leadership, Dean observed that American officials thought that any dispute over policy was between the *Politburo* and lower-level party officials, not within the Soviet leadership itself. He stated that the consensus in Washington was that the Soviets still intended to undermine Western influence in the Middle East, and that there was a 'real danger' that the USSR would use arms shipments and the presence of Soviet military advisors to gain more control over the 'progressive' regimes.[46]

Dean wondered if Kohler 'was perhaps not telling me the full story' about American attitudes, and the British ambassador remained unaware of the exchange of 'hot-line' messages between Kosygin and Johnson on 10-11 June. The Soviets had threatened military intervention on Syria's behalf if Israel did not cease its offensive in the Golan Heights. Johnson responded that he had urged the Israelis to cease their operations, but he also ordered the Sixth Fleet into the Eastern Mediterranean in order to deter the Soviets. A potential superpower crisis was

[45] Washington to FO, No.1936, 5.6.67, **PREM13/1620**(PRO). Dean to Hayman, 18.7.67, **FCO28/33**(PRO). Dean to Gore-Booth, 13.7.67, **FCO28/31**(PRO).
[46] Dean to Hayman, 18.7.67 & 25.7.67, **FCO28/33**(PRO).

defused when Israel accepted a ceasefire on the 11th, yet this was the first occasion in which the Washington-Moscow hot-line was used in earnest.[47] At the end of the month Kosygin attended the UN General Assembly debate on the Middle East, and Johnson took the opportunity to arrange a meeting with the Soviet Premier. However, the latter was unwilling to travel to Washington, while the President was equally determined not to meet Kosygin in New York. As a compromise, both leaders met in the small town of Glassboro, New Jersey (23-25 June 1967). The Glassboro summit did little to break the US-Soviet impasse on ABMs, Vietnam or the Middle East. Yet the discussions were free from acrimony and Johnson - like Wilson and Brown before him - expressed his satisfaction at having finally met the Soviet Premier. Dean observed that the establishment of personal contact between both leaders was the most significant part of the Glassboro summit, and concluded that Glassboro would reinforce the tendency of both superpowers towards bilateral, rather than multilateral negotiations. This judgement was confirmed both by the course of US-Soviet negotiations on the NPT text, and by Johnson's efforts to discuss arms control with the Soviet leadership.[48]

At the end of June, Harrison informed Gore-Booth that as a consequence of the Six Day War, the Soviets were exaggerating, rather than minimising, their differences with the Western powers. The ambassador also suggested that

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[47] Bregman & El-Tahri, *Fifty Years War*, pp.94-98. Golan, *Soviet Policies*, pp.64-65. McNamara, *In Retrospect*, pp.278-280. R. Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, (OUP 1998), pp.431-433.
[48] The record of the Glassboro summit is in *FRUS XIV*, 23-25.6.67, pp.514-556. Dean to Brown, 4.7.67, **PREM13/1497**(PRO).

Kosygin's position within the *Politburo* had suffered as a result of the Arab defeat. Gore-Booth responded that the Soviets needed to remain in contact with the Americans because of the risks of a superpower confrontation, but the same did not apply to the British, who did not 'carry the same weight in the Middle East and because it is not of a military clash with us that [the Soviets] are afraid'. Gore-Booth's comments also reflected a widespread feeling within London during the summer of 1967 that Britain had no influence over events, and simply had to weather all the consequences of the Six Day War - the closure of the Suez canal, the exacerbation of Arab-Israeli hostility, the increase in Soviet aid to Egypt and other regional clients, and the 'big lie' - as best as possible.[49] Harrison's assessment that Moscow had blundered in its handling of the Middle East crisis reflected Foreign Office opinion as a whole. However, in order to recover its position in the region, the USSR provided Egypt, Syria and other clients with sufficient stocks of weapons to replace those lost in June 1967. By May 1968, JIC officials observed, the Soviets had 'largely succeeded' in overcoming the loss of prestige resulting from 'their failure to intervene militarily' during the Six Day War, and were determined to 'maintain their stake' in the Middle East.[50]

[49] Harrison to Gore-Booth, 26.6.67; Gore-Booth to Harrison, 2.8.67, **FCO28/371**(PRO).
[50] VCAS to Healey, 20.12.67, **AIR20/12134**(PRO). JIC(68)20th, 9.5.68, **CAB159/48**(PRO).

Conclusions:

In October 1967, Wilson proudly told Labour party delegates at the Scarborough conference that 'we have switched resources from defence to the social services - the right priority for a Socialist government'. While the Prime Minister was clearly content to cut military expenditure, his actual role in the defence reviews was minimal. Wilson was never personally involved in military issues, and the fact that Healey served as Defence Secretary throughout Labour's term in office was significant. Despite his poor relationship with the Prime Minister, Healey's continued service at the MoD reflected his central role in implementing Labour's defence policy.[51] If Wilson showed negligence in cutting back defence expenditure, as the Conservatives argued in Parliamentary debates on the East of Suez decision, then Healey too deserves some of the blame.[52] Within the Cabinet, critics of the defence cuts hardly, if at, referred to the USSR as a growing threat. British policy-makers were more concerned with regional adversaries and, in South-East Asia, with China.[53] Brown did retrospectively assert that 'the growing Russian advance in the Indian Ocean' led him to support the sale of naval weaponry to South Africa in December 1967, but he made no reference to this threat at either the OPD or Cabinet meetings.[54]

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[51] Wilson, *Labour Government*, pp.433-434. Healey, *Time of My Life*, p.299, pp.324-325, p.331.
[52] H.C.Deb5s, 756, (HMSO 1968), cols.1973-2084. H.C.Deb5s, 757 (HMSO 1968), col.420.
[53] OPD(68)58, *The Czechoslovak Crisis and British Defence Policy*, 20.9.68, **CAB148/38**.
[54] Brown, *In My Way*, pp.163-164. OPD(67)39th meeting, 8.12.67, **CAB148/30**(PRO). CC70(67)70th & CC71(67)71st conclusions, 14.12.67 & 15.12.67, **CAB128/42**(PRO). The proposed sale of maritime weapons to South Africa was the cause of a bitter Cabinet row, and Healey (who supported Brown in the dispute) does not repeat the latter's justification. See *Time of My Life*, pp.335-336.

For all their protests, the Conservatives could not answer the question of how Britain could maintain a 'world role' with its weak economy, and in response Brown argued that the opposition's interpretation of international relations was 'both too black and white and a little old-fashioned'. The Foreign Secretary's comments reflected Labour's concern over the emergence of Third World nationalism, which Brown himself showed in late 1967 through his personal interest in re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cairo.[55] As the Soviets themselves discovered when their advisors were expelled from Egypt in 1972, a military presence in any given region did not necessarily ensure lasting influence.[56] Furthermore, Britain's commitments to CENTO and SEATO were rendered void by the fact that both alliances were moribund by the mid-1960s. SEATO was hopelessly divided over Vietnam, while Pakistan (a member of both CENTO and SEATO) regarded India, rather than the USSR or the PRC, as its principal foe. Despite Iran's membership of CENTO, Teheran enjoyed good political and commercial relations with the Soviets. Stewart had declared in November 1965 that the UK's 'task' was to work with other powers to block 'the further extension either of the military power or the political influence' of the USSR and China, but it was clear that the South Asian neighbours of both Communist giants did not share this objective.[57]

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[55] H.C.Deb5s, 750, (HMSO 1967), col.2489. Brown, *In My Way*, pp.130-132.
[56] B. Reed & G. Williams, *Denis Healey and the Policies of Power*, (London; Sidgwick & Jackson 1971), pp.8-9. Golan, *Soviet Policies*, pp.78-79.
[57] Calvocoressi, *World Politics*, p.522. OPD(65)28th, 2.6.65, **CAB148/18**(PRO). OPD(65)174, **CAB148/25**(PRO). On Iranian-Soviet relations, see Golan, *Soviet Policies*, pp.179-180, & JIC(67)11, **CAB158/66**(PRO).

If the Labour government was complacent in its assessment of Soviet intentions world-wide, then there is no evidence to suggest that it disregarded official advice. In the summer of 1967, Shuckburgh (serving as ambassador to Rome) did express concern at the reduction of the Royal Navy's presence in the Mediterranean, arguing that Soviet political ambitions in the region illustrated the 'continuing requirement for British as well as United States vessels in the area to neutralise [this] effort'. One British diplomat assigned to NATO commented that the Alliance's naval commanders were concerned at the expansion of Soviet maritime power.[58] However, the COS concluded that NATO naval commanders 'over-emphasised the offensive nature of Soviet maritime strategy', while the Foreign Office considered press reports on the USSR's intentions in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East to be alarmist.[59] Gore-Booth informed Shuckburgh that the reductions in naval forces in the Mediterranean made in the 1966 defence review were irreversible, and that in the context of its economic problems Britain could not afford to 'field in the Mediterranean naval forces which would add much to the vast bulk of the United States Sixth Fleet as a counterbalance to the Soviet naval presence'. Gore-Booth also noted that an increased British commitment in the Mediterranean would not have stopped the Arab oil embargo which followed the Six Day War, and would have instead contributed to the 'big lie' of Anglo-American intervention on Israel's side.[60]

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[58] R. Sykes (Defence Dept) to Gore-Booth, 18.7.67; & G. Millard (UKDelNATO) to E. Barnes, 25.8.67, **FCO46/2**(PRO).
[59] D. McCarthy to W. Haydon (Eastern Dept), 1.1.68, **FCO17/17**(PRO). Annotated comment on *Guardian* article, 25.9.67, **FCO28/35**(PRO). COS27th/68, 14.5.68, **DEFE4/228**(PRO).
[60] Sykes to Gore-Booth, 18.7.67; & Gore-Booth to Shuckburgh, 19.7.67, **FCO46/2**.

As far as Soviet maritime capability was concerned, during the spring of 1968 the JIC was split over whether the USSR possessed the capacity to maintain a permanent naval presence outside its territorial waters. Some officials argued that the build-up of the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean had involved the reduction of the Baltic fleet. British intelligence analysts also argued that despite the enhancement of the USSR's maritime and airlift capabilities 'it was improbable that an opposed intervention could be attempted outside a general war in areas not contiguous with the Soviet bloc'.[61] The JIC assessments forwarded by Palliser to Wilson in August 1968 concluded that while the Soviets would continue to aim to weaken Western influence in the Middle East, exploiting the Arab-Israeli conflict to this end, the USSR was still concerned about the risks of a clash with the USA. Soviet ambitions were also hampered by the volatility of client regimes (including those of Syria and newly-independent South Yemen), Arab nationalist opposition to any form of foreign hegemony and the ideological tensions between Islam and Communism.[62]

Other West European powers showed little intention in supporting commitments which, as Healey and Rusk frequently claimed, served Western interests as a whole. France in particular displayed complete disinterest in developments outside Europe, was an entirely reluctant member of SEATO, and showed no concern over Soviet activities in the Third World.[63] American concerns

[61] JIC(68)12th, 14.3.68; & JIC(68)18th, 25.4.68, **CAB159/48**(PRO).
[62] JIC(68)34(Final), *Soviet Intentions in the Mediterranean*, 20.5.68; JIC(68)19(Final), *Soviet Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, 4.6.68, **PREM13/2959**(PRO). Hennessy, *Prime Minister*, p.292.
[63] Conversation between de Gaulle & PM at Versailles, 19.6.67, **PREM13/1622**. *Brief for Secretary of State's Discussions with Mr Christopher Soames on Monday 6 September* (1968), **FCO15/5**.

over the East of Suez withdrawals focused almost exclusively upon the Far East, and with the exception of Rusk, Johnson's officials were less worried about the fate of Africa and the Middle East. Washington was, in the words of one British diplomat, 'resentful of our failure to support [their] anti-Communist crusade', and generally 'contemptuous of our economic and financial difficulties and diminished power influence'. By late 1967-early 1968 the Johnson administration no longer pretended that the UK was a partner with an extra-European role.[64]

As Gore-Booth observed, a military presence did not automatically translate into political influence, and the argument that the East of Suez withdrawals contributed to the more assertive Soviet policy of the 1970s draws a neat link between cause and effect which - without access to Russian source material - remains hypothetical. Furthermore, the end of the British military presence overseas did not necessarily enhance Soviet (or Chinese) influence. The withdrawal from Aden was followed by the establishment of a Marxist regime in South Yemen, but the extermination of the PKI and the fall of Sukarno represented a significant gain for Western influence over Indonesia and South-East Asia as a whole.[65] Despite Britain's fortuitous success in containing the Indonesian threat to Malaysia, the Aden insurgency and UDI in Rhodesia demonstrated the limits of British power overseas. Outside official circles contemporary academic specialists generally favoured the withdrawal from East of Suez and the concentration on a

[64] Conversation between Ball, Healey, McNamara & Stewart at No.10, 26.11.65, **PREM13/799**. Conversation at White House, 29.7.66, **CAB164/3**. D. Swan, *Anglo-American Relations*, 4.12.67, **FCO7/775**. Petersen, 'Crossing the Rubicon', p.334, pp.339-340.
[65] Dunbabin, *Cold War*, pp.240-243. J. Dunbabin, *The Post-Imperial Age: The Great Powers and the Wider World*, (Longman 1994), pp.361-363.

European role. In terms of East-West competition a reinforced British contribution to NATO counted more than the retention of the 'world role', and it is significant that the East of Suez decisions were made at the same time at a time when the Wilson government concluded that British interests lay in assuming a greater role in European affairs. Yet the end of the 'world role', combined with the devaluation crisis, strengthened the impression that the UK was in decline. In Kenneth Morgan's words, Britain was regarded at home and abroad as a weak power, 'unheeded in Europe, a token head of the Commonwealth, a largely powerless client of the Americans, unable to retain what had for so long been its own'.[66] The tone of Anglo-Soviet relations in the months which followed probably reflected this image of British decrepitude.

[66] On contemporary academic opinion, see A Buchan & M. Howard's essays in *International Affairs*, 42/2 (1966). Morgan, *People's Peace*, p.283.

CHAPTER 8: THE IMPACT OF THE 'PRAGUE SPRING'. JANUARY-AUGUST 1968.

Five years after the 'white heat' speech at Scarborough, the Labour government had failed to revive the British economy. The pound remained fragile after devaluation, and de Gaulle's veto against the UK's attempt to join the EEC (December 1967) was an additional humiliation. Wilson's tense relationship with his leading Ministers deteriorated as a result of the former's paranoia, fed by rumours of conspiracies to overthrow him.[1] While the Labour government's attention was focused upon Britain's domestic economic difficulties, other Western states were beset by their own internal troubles. In France's case, de Gaulle was almost toppled by student riots in Paris in May 1968.[2] In January 1968, the Johnson administration was shaken by the Tet offensive in Vietnam and the seizure of the USS *Pueblo* by the North Koreans, and the President assumed that these two crises were co-ordinated by the Communist powers. The Tet offensive was a military defeat for the NLF and the NVA, yet it made a mockery of administration claims that the USA was winning the conflict in Vietnam. The war effort had already widened the American balance of payments deficit, and had provoked anti-war protests. On 31 March Johnson announced that he would not seek re-election, and his status as a 'lame duck' President hampered his plans for strategic arms talks with the Soviets. Increased anti-war agitation, widespread racial

[1] Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.493-509. Brown gives his account of his resignation in *In My Way*, pp.162-178. See also Healey, *Time of My Life*, pp.335-337 for an unflattering portrait of Wilson's relationship with his Cabinet.
[2] Morgan, *People's Peace*, pp.283-284. Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, pp.470-471. Young, *Cold War Europe*, p.69, pp.95-96, p.139.

violence and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy contributed to the impression that the USA was in a state of crisis.[3] When examining the international response to events in Eastern Europe in the summer of 1968 it is important to remember that the British and other Western governments devoted considerable attention to their own internal problems.

The Soviet leadership could have contemplated this turmoil in the capitalist world with ill-disguised *schadenfreude* had it not been for the fact that the Eastern bloc had its own internal troubles. Student riots in Warsaw and Krakow in March 1968 provoked a harsh crackdown by the Gomulka regime, combining repression with state-supported anti-Semitism. Prominent Jews like Rapacki were demoted, and thousands of Polish Jews and intellectuals emigrated. As noted below, British officials had previously considered Poland to be the least authoritarian of the bloc states, but as Clutton had predicted two years previously, in the spring of 1968 Gomulka renounced 'national Communism' in favour of dogmatic conservatism.[4]

These events in Poland were overshadowed by the overthrow of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS), Antonin Novotny, on 5 January 1968. The failures of the command economy, student protests, nationalist discontent in Slovakia and Novotny's increasing unpopularity within the CPCS all contributed to his downfall and replacement by Alexander Dubcek. At the end of

[3] Schulzinger, *Time for War*, pp.242-244, pp.259-267.
[4] Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.318-319. C. Thompson to J. Whitehead, 20.10.64, **FO371/177407**(PRO). Clutton to H. Smith, 7.6.66, **FO371/188510**(PRO).

March, Novotny was forced to resign the Presidency in favour of Ludvik Svoboda. The new leadership - Dubcek, Svoboda and the Premier, Oldrich Cernik - introduced an 'Action Programme' in April, promising a reduction of state control over the economy, freedom of speech, travel and debate, and the curtailment of StB powers.[5] Although Novotny's successors reaffirmed Czechoslovakia's loyalty to the USSR, the Soviets were alarmed by the implications of what Dubcek termed 'socialism with a human face'. Brezhnev visited Prague in December 1967, but did not intervene to defend Novotny against his enemies. However, the gradual democratisation of Czechoslovakia under Dubcek provoked widespread concerns in Moscow, Warsaw, East Berlin, Budapest and Sofia not only over Prague's continued allegiance to the Communist cause, but over what would happen if the 'Prague Spring' encouraged similar demands for reform throughout the Soviet bloc.[6]

While the CPCS leadership made tentative efforts at domestic reform, the Soviet leadership retreated into inflexible ideological dogmatism. Brezhnev and his peers did not oversee a return to state terror on a Stalinist scale, but nonetheless intellectual dissidents and non-Russian nationalists were dealt with ruthlessly by the KGB. The JIC had noted in April 1964 that 'there is no reason to believe that the KGB has more than an advisory role' as far as domestic or foreign

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[5] Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.318-319. The 'Action Programme' of April 1968 is in J. Navratil, A. Bencik, V. Kural, M. Michalkova & J. Vondrova (eds.), *The Prague Spring 1968. A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, (Budapest; Central European University Press 1998), pp.92-95 (cited as *Prague Spring 1968*). Other studies on Czechoslovakia in 1968 include K. Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring*, (Berkeley Ca.; University of California Press 1984); H. Gordon Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, (Princeton University Press 1976); & J. Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia: Anatomy of a Decision*, (Baltimore Ma.; Johns Hopkins University Press 1979).

[6] Hosking, *Soviet Union*, pp.431-433. W. Loth, 'Moscow, Prague and Warsaw: Overcoming the Brezhnev Doctrine', in *Cold War History*, 1/2 (2001), pp.103-105. See *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.18-19 for Brezhnev's comments to CPCS officials on 9.12.67.

policy was concerned. Yet three years later the KGB's Chairman, Yuri Andropov, assumed a significant position in Soviet decision-making. Andropov was appointed to his post in April 1967, and in June he became a candidate (non-voting) member of the *Politburo*. His mindset was illustrated by a report presented to Brezhnev in May 1968 summarising the KGB's activities the previous year. Andropov took it for granted that the USA (the 'main enemy') and other Western powers were bent upon subverting the USSR, although he was also concerned about the implications of China's 'splittist' (sic) policies for Soviet security. He informed Brezhnev that the KGB had established a separate department (the Fifth Directorate) directed against internal dissidents, and he placed considerable emphasis on the threat posed by nationalist unrest in Ukraine and the Caucasus. However, Andropov commented regretfully that 'agent access to governmental, military, intelligence and ideological centres of the enemy' was unsatisfactory, and that the 'struggle with the enemy's ideological subversion is not sufficiently effective'.[7] He was convinced that Western efforts to develop *détente* and to increase commercial and cultural contacts with the Eastern bloc were intended to undermine Communism, and that internal dissidents were inspired by external powers. The fact that Dubcek permitted both debate on the future of Communism and the establishment of independent civil society groups in Czechoslovakia frightened the KGB Chairman and his *Politburo* colleagues.[8] The 'Prague Spring' posed a clear threat to the Communist order and Soviet authority over Eastern

[7] JIC(64)43, *The Power Structure in the Soviet Union*, 17.4.64, **CAB158/53**(PRO). Andropov to Brezhnev, 6.5.68, in R. Garthoff & A. Knight (eds.), 'New Evidence on Soviet Intelligence. The KGB's 1967 Annual Report', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 10 (1998), pp.211-217. Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.380-382.
[8] Dawisha, *Prague Spring*, pp.15-18, pp.22-32.

Europe, and the main aim of this chapter is to analyse the impact of events in Czechoslovakia on British policy-making from the downfall of Novotny to the Warsaw Pact invasion (August 1968) and its aftermath.

London's reassessment of Anglo-Soviet relations: January-June 1968.

Wilson's visit to Moscow (22-24 January) was his last trip to the USSR during his term in office. Four days before his departure from London, the Americans and Soviets had presented identical draft NPTs to the UN's Disarmament Committee. Johnson pressed the Soviets for a fixed date for strategic arms talks, and in comparison Washington's attitude towards Wilson's visit the USSR was apathetic. Rusk punctured the Prime Minister's image of Britain as an intermediary between the two superpowers when he told Brown in December 1967 that 'the Americans and Russians held high level conversations on any subject which was of interest to them', and that the British should recognise that their contacts with the Soviet leadership 'formed only a part of the Americans' knowledge of Soviet attitudes, most of which they got first hand'.[9]

Foreign Office assessments of the Soviet leadership still depicted Brezhnev as pre-eminent within the 'triumvirate' consisting of himself, Kosygin and the President, Nikolai Podgorny. Yet Kosygin's position was considered to have been

[9] Clearwater, *Arms Control*, pp.297-298. Freeman, *Arms Control Policy*, pp.249-250. D. Day (FO) to Palliser, 15.12.67, **PREM13/2402**(PRO).

weakened because of his tendency to undertake personal initiatives during his foreign visits - the two examples from his trip to Britain being the Phase A / Phase B negotiations and his proposal for a 'treaty of friendship'. Officials presumed that within the CPSU the elderly leadership was challenged by a younger generation of party apparatchiks, particularly Shelepin and the Deputy Premier, Polyanskii. The Foreign Office considered the leadership as a whole to be rigidly conservative, and officials incorrectly presumed that Brezhnev had tried to defend Novotny when he visited Prague.[10] Gore-Booth stated that 'the Russians are being the reverse of easy and helpful' on the principal issues in East-West relations - Vietnam, the Middle East and European security - and the Permanent Under-Secretary felt that Britain's economic troubles provided 'an unhappy background' to the Prime Minister's visit. Harrison informed the head of the Northern Department that the UK had been given 'an unrelievedly bad press' by the Soviet media, with frequent references to the devaluation crisis and the East of Suez withdrawals.[11] Harrison, like other British diplomats, concluded that the Soviets would try to exploit Britain's economic plight and would put pressure on Wilson to break ties with the USA. The Foreign Office's approach was to play down the significance of the visit, presenting it as one in a series of bilateral contacts. Its officials did not, as one under-secretary stated, 'wish to encourage the idea that the visit is going to produce anything at all sensational'.[12]

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[10] Day to Palliser, 21.11.67, **PREM13/2405**(PRO). PMV(M)(68)1, *Prime Minister's Visit to Moscow, January 1968. Steering Brief*, 17.1.68, **FCO28/400**(PRO).
[11] Gore-Booth to Hayman, 8.1.68, **FCO28/399**(PRO). Harrison to Smith, 17.1.68, in G. Bennett (ed.), *DBPO III, I*, (HMSO 1997), pp.5-8.
[12] Harrison to Smith, *DBPO III, I*, pp.5-8. Hood to Dean, 17.1.68, **FCO28/399**(PRO). PMV(M)(68)1, **FCO28/400**(PRO).

This attitude contrasted with that of the Prime Minister, who intended 'if not to take a new initiative on Anglo/Soviet trade, to stimulate some further move in our relationship with the Soviet Union in both the trade and technological fields'. Benn and his Soviet counterpart, Vladimir Kirillin, signed an agreement on technological co-operation in London on 19 January, and Wilson hoped for progress on either a long-term trade agreement, or on a reduction of the COCOM lists. As noted previously, there was widespread support within Whitehall for a relaxation of the strategic embargo, at least as far as the Soviet bloc was concerned, but the next COCOM review was not due until October 1968. Foreign Office officials therefore argued that Britain was 'not in a position to give any undertaking about action by COCOM to reduce the Embargo list'. The Prime Minister was also informed that inter-departmental deliberations on the liberalisation of trade with the bloc countries had yet to reach their conclusion.[13]

Following his arrival in Moscow on 22 January, Wilson nonetheless informed Kosygin that the British government favoured the reform of COCOM, as it was 'no longer reasonable to apply the same kind of limitations to the Soviet Union as to China'. The Prime Minister asserted that 'he himself favoured a liberalisation with (sic) the Soviet Union and tighter controls in regard to China'. Kosygin maintained that the USSR had its own embargo on strategic trade with the PRC, and in discussions the following day he sought to play on British suspicions that other Western powers were violating COCOM's rules. He asserted

[13] A. Halls (No.10) to B. Meynell (BoT), 8.1.68; Meynell to Halls, 18.1.68, **FCO28/399**(PRO). Day to Halls, 19.1.68, **CAB164/406**(PRO). British policy on East-West trade is discussed in Chapter Six.

that 'if the Soviet Union had any difficulty buying from Britain, then she bought from Japan or the United States'. On the subject of long-term trade Kosygin also suggested that the USSR could increase its exports to the UK 'in order to free Britain from dependence on the United States' (ironically enough, this was roughly what Wilson had recommended in his 1952 essay, *In Place of Dollars*).[14] This theme was continually raised by Wilson's hosts throughout his visit, hence Kosygin's comment on the afternoon of the 22nd that it was 'a pity ... that [Britain] could not follow the same kind of independent policy as de Gaulle'. The following day Brezhnev treated the Prime Minister to another lecture on the threat the FRG posed to peace in Europe. Brezhnev proposed the mutual abolition of NATO and the WTO and a German peace treaty 'on the basis of the original Potsdam Agreement' of 1945. The Prime Minister's reference to the possibility of mutual force reductions also fell on deaf ears. As noted previously, Wilson took Soviet hostility towards Germany for granted, but British diplomats considered Brezhnev's 'back to Postdam' theme to be particularly disturbing.[15]

The Prime Minister's conversation with Podgorny and Gromyko on the morning of the 24th focused principally on the Brooke case. Wilson yet again pleaded for increased consular access for Brooke, stating that many Labour MPs shared the public's impression that the punishment of this 'foolish young man' did not fit the crime. Wilson maintained that he 'deplored every minute that had

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[14] Conversation between Kosygin & PM, 22.1.68 (am), *Visit of the Prime Minister to the Soviet Union, 22-24 January 1968*, **CAB164/406**(PRO). Conversation between Kosygin & PM in Kremlin, 23.1.68 (pm), *DBPO III, I*, pp.8-13. Wilson, *In Place of Dollars*, passim.

[15] Conversation between Kosygin & PM, 22.1.68 (pm); & conversation between Brezhnev & PM in the Kremlin, 23.1.68 (am), **PREM13/2402**(PRO).

to be devoted to this subject and thereby denied to serious discussion of other deeper problems', even though his efforts to discuss these 'deeper problems' with Brezhnev and Kosygin had produced little of substance. The only noteworthy feature of this discussion was a rare attempt at humour from Gromyko. Wilson sourly commented on the criticism he was receiving from the British media over the Brooke case, and stated that the press 'expected him to send in a detachment of Marines to break open [Brooke's] prison'. Gromyko quipped that the rescue party would have to apply for their visas first. Brooke was to remain in custody for one more year, and was eventually released in exchange for the Krogers.[16]

Following Wilson's return, British officials exchanged views on the balance power within the Soviet leadership. Edward Orchard, who had served as the Prime Minister's interpreter, described the *Politburo*'s members as being of 'moderate intelligence', dependant on officials like Gromyko and lacking any 'vision' in policy-making. Orchard also concluded that Polyanskii was after Kosygin's job. Palliser agreed that Kosygin was clearly less confident and more guarded than he had been in London the previous year, and was constrained by Polyanskii's presence, but he questioned Orchard's conclusion that the Soviet Foreign Minister and other secondary officials held the leadership in thrall. Gromyko had served as a diplomat since the Stalinist era, but Wilson's Private Secretary did not regard him as a decision-maker. Trend seconded this assessment, depicting the Foreign Minister as one of 'nature's henchmen', possessing 'technical competence' as a

[16] Conversation between Gromyko, Podgorny & PM in the Kremlin, 24.1.68 (am); & D. Wilson (Moscow) to Greenhill, 29.10.69, *DBPO III, I*, pp.14-21, pp.188-189.

diplomat but being temperamentally 'frightened of being responsible for major policy decisions'. The Cabinet Secretary showed some sympathy for Kosgyin, who appeared more prepared than his peers to 'take a calculated risk in going some way to meet the other chap's point of view', provided this was compatible with the USSR's long-term interests. Trend also suggested that Brezhnev's position in the leadership could be adversely affected by his failing health.[17]

As noted previously, Kosygin and Wilson agreed to negotiate a 'friendship' treaty in during the former's visit to the UK. The British had presented their draft in April 1967, which focused on trade, scientific co-operation and the establishment of closer cultural, education and sporting links. However, London had to wait until the end of Wilson's visit for the Soviet version. This text had, in the words of one Moscow embassy official, 'objectionable features which stick out a mile'. Howard Smith stated that the Soviet draft did not 'even attempt to be a treaty of friendship', but instead contained 'unacceptable' clauses demanding British endorsement of the USSR's policy on the German question. The text's language was also implicitly aimed against Britain's alliance with the USA and its membership of NATO.[18] Smith concluded that the Soviets were trying to 'kill' the treaty and place responsibility for its failure on Britain. Foreign Office officials were concerned that Moscow might publicise their draft in order to exploit the tensions over the 'treaty' which had arisen between the UK and other NATO powers the previous spring, and Harrison was instructed to refer Gromyko to the

[17] Orchard to Palliser, 30.1.68; Palliser to Orchard, 21.2.68; & Trend to Palliser, 29.2.68, **PREM13/2405**(PRO).
[18] P. Maxey (Moscow) to C. Giffard (ND), 24.1.68, **FCO28/372**(PRO). Smith to Hayman, 30.1.68, **FCO28/380**(PRO). The Soviet draft 'friendship treaty' is in Appendix 4.

original draft. However, the latter simply stated that a 'friendship' treaty was impossible as long as Britain remained part of NATO.[19]

Harrison informed Hayman on 6 February that while Wilson had been received courteously, the Soviets had been unenthusiastic about the visit. The final communiqué made no reference to the recently concluded technological treaty. The Soviets had deliberately downgraded the importance of Anglo-Soviet contacts, and had consistently stated that the UK's loyalty to the USA was a constraint on bilateral relations. The only positive point the ambassador could make was that 'contact had been maintained' with the Soviet leadership.[20] Within the Foreign Office, however, the tone of Soviet rhetoric during Wilson's visit had touched a raw nerve. Four days before Wilson's arrival in Moscow, Gore-Booth informed William Rodgers (the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) that '[as] regards the Soviet Union, the situation has been extremely difficult for officials'. The Permanent Under-Secretary noted that both he and his subordinates were considered by Parliamentary critics to be 'anti-Soviet' and 'Russophobe', and he was frustrated that the USSR's pronouncements on *détente* appeared to be taken at face value by domestic opinion. Gore-Booth also expressed his concerns over Wilson's refusal to confront Kosygin over his public attacks on British foreign policy in February 1967. The Permanent Under-Secretary was evidently worried that Soviet propaganda was having a divisive effect on the Western world as a whole, and that Parliamentary and public opinion overlooked the fact that the

[19] Smith to Hayman, 25.1.68, **FCO28/372**(PRO). Day to Palliser, 1.2.68, **FCO28/380**(PRO).
[20] Harrison to Hayman, 6.2.68, **PREM13/2402**(PRO). Harrison to Brown, 31.1.68, **FCO28/402**(PRO).

USSR remained a threat to British security. Gore-Booth felt that it was time that Ministers re-appraise the UK's policy towards the Soviets.[21]

This belief was shared by the Deputy Under-Secretary, Greenhill, who argued that for all the supposed improvements in the 'atmosphere' of Anglo-Soviet relations in recent years, Wilson's recent trip to Moscow had been a failure. The Soviets had attempted to bully the Prime Minister into changing British policy, and the only hopeful development, other than US-Soviet agreement on an NPT, was that Moscow seemed ready to for arms control talks with Washington. Gore-Booth informed Brown on 1 February that Greenhill's analysis was, in his opinion, 'the genuine article'. The Soviets would continue to manipulate differences between the UK and its allies, and would seek the dissolution of NATO. They would also exploit Britain's willingness to develop commercial and scientific contacts with the Eastern bloc, and would hold out the prospect of increased co-operation in these fields if the British renounced their alliance ties with the Americans. Moscow presumed that it possessed the advantage because of the UK's financial problems, and would continue to discredit Britain through its propaganda. Gore-Booth sought to remind Brown that the Soviets would persist with these objectives until either the UK resorted to neutralism, or the 'evolution' of Soviet society led to the adoption of a less ideological foreign policy. Brown's response was to write on Gore-Booth's letter 'I don't see where this minute leads'.[22] This exchange of notes led to a reassessment of British policy towards

[21] Gore-Booth to W. Rodgers, 16.1.68, MSS Gore-Booth, 93, fol.95-96.
[22] Greenhill to Gore-Booth, 29.1.68; & Gore-Booth to Brown, 31.1.68, **FCO28/402**(PRO).

the USSR, with the Foreign Secretary being encouraged by his subordinates to adopt a harder line towards the Soviets. The form which this assessment adopted reflected not only the state of East-West relations at the time, but the limitations imposed on a medium power seeking to improve its relations with an ideologically hostile superpower which was also a potential enemy.

British diplomats resented not only Wilson's treatment during his visit to Moscow, but also the increased scale of Soviet espionage in the UK. Three years previously, Foreign Office officials considered the complaints of Conservative MPs like Commander Courtney to be a nuisance,[23] but by February 1968 Eastern bloc intelligence activities aroused greater concern within Whitehall. The catalyst for Foreign Office complaints was the apprehension of a Soviet embassy official, V. A. Drozdov, at a 'dead letter-box' (a location for concealing sensitive materials) in London. Drozdov was declared *persona non grata*, but while the Northern Department wanted to publicise this scandal, Brown was disinclined to make much of Drozdov's case. The Foreign Secretary stated that SIS officers in the Eastern bloc also employed diplomatic cover, and that one had been apprehended in Warsaw and, like Drozdov, expelled. If the UK and USSR engaged in tit-for-tat expulsions of embassy personnel then the British would come off worse because they had fewer diplomats and intelligence officers The Foreign Secretary also thought that 'there was an inherent contradiction between the [Foreign] Office's wish on the one hand to bring home to Parliament and public the iniquities of

[23] Conversation between Courtney & PM, 29.6.65, **PREM13/483**(PRO).

the KGB and, on the other, to increase *détente* with the Russians in every possible field'.[24]

On 23 February Brown met with Goronwy Roberts (the Foreign Office Minister of State), Greenhill, Smith and Hayman for what the latter perhaps euphemistically termed a 'most useful and stimulating discussion' on Anglo-Soviet relations. By the end of this meeting, the Foreign Secretary was persuaded that, while the UK's essential objective of promoting *détente* should remain unchanged, there should be 'less running after the Russians' and fewer Ministerial visits to the USSR. Britain should take a 'tough and realistic line' with the Soviets whenever disputes arose, whether over foreign policy issues or over KGB activities in the UK. Brown's subordinates had concluded that the British government had been 'over-enthusiastic' in pursuing agreements with the USSR, and that in response to Soviet propaganda invective against the UK, British propaganda should 'attack the Russians in the area where they are most vulnerable', namely the KGB's suppression of Soviet dissidents. Foreign Office officials also considered that the UK should increase its contacts with the East European states in response to their 'desire to break free' from Soviet hegemony.[25]

Harrison's own analysis of Anglo-Soviet relations, sent to London in early March, struck a more cautious note. The ambassador to Moscow repeated his

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[24] D. Maitland (FO) to Gore-Booth, 12.2.68, **FCO28/372**. *DBPO III, I*, fn.4, p.28. Brown was presumably referring to the case involving Adam Kaczmarczyk, a clerk in the Polish Defence Ministry recruited by SIS. Kaczmarczyk was caught and executed in late 1967, and an SIS officer in the Warsaw embassy was expelled. See M. Urban, *UK Eyes Alpha. The Inside Story of British Intelligence*, (London; Faber & Faber 1997), p.100.
[25] Hayman to Harrison, 27.2.68, *DBPO III, I*, pp.25-28. Note by Maitland, 23.2.68, **FCO28/372**.

argument that despite the USSR's ideological hostility to the West 'the Soviet leaders are careful not to get themselves into situations where an open conflict could be damaging to the basic interests of the Soviet Union'. In their relations with the British, the Soviets favoured trade and scientific co-operation - which had clear economic benefits for the USSR - over cultural and educational exchanges which would expose Soviet society to the corrupting influence of the capitalist West. Harrison drew a distinction between attacking Eastern bloc espionage in Britain and criticisms of the KGB's repressive activities against dissidents. Although the latter would embarrass the Soviets and 'have the "incidental" effect of educating people at home on the iniquities of Communism', propaganda attacks 'could well have a prejudicial effect on Anglo-Soviet relations' in general:

> I like to believe that we have long outgrown our role as world governess. Is [our objective] retaliation for hurtful attacks by Russian propaganda on our own policies? Or is it part of the battle for the hearts and minds of the neutral, uncommitted peoples of the world? In other words, is this a continuation of the "cold war"? ... I repeat that I am not opposed to embarrassing the Russians on these issues; I am simply supporting the Foreign Secretary's view that there could be a certain inconsistency here with the pursuit of better relations and that we should therefore be clear what our objective is and that it is a worth while (sic) one.

In contrast, William Rodgers asserted that '[the] genuine wish of most people for peace and reconciliation has led to a good deal of sentimentality towards the Soviet Union, and not only from the left'. Kosygin's trip to Britain had influenced public opinion to a greater degree than less savoury aspects of the Soviet system such as the persecution of dissidents. Nonetheless, Rodgers expressed confusion as to the apparent contradiction between the USSR's readiness to split the West Europeans from the USA, as opposed to Moscow's expressed fear of an

unrestrained FRG. The Northern Department's response was that without the USA, the West Europeans would be unable to withstand Soviet pressure, and that Moscow calculated that it could get its way on the GDR and Berlin. In other words, Northern Department officials were less inclined to treat Soviet concerns over West German 'revanchism' as genuine. A strong and united Western alliance would not only deter the Soviets from 'engaging in adventurist (sic) policies', but would also encourage the East Europeans to reduce their dependence on the USSR.[26]

Brown's discussions with his Foreign Office subordinates on 23 February led to the presentation of a paper entitled *Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* to the OPD in mid-June. By this time Stewart was again Foreign Secretary. The previous March the feud between Wilson and Brown had reached its climax, and the latter finally resigned from the Cabinet. Brown had shown hesitancy in approving the Foreign Office's interpretation of Soviet policy, but Stewart evidently supported the conclusions contained in the OPD paper, which need to be summarised at length. *Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* argued that the Soviet leadership recognised that the command economy was in dire need of reform and de-centralisation, with greater initiative and responsibility granted to the managerial and technocratic classes. However, such reforms would 'run counter to ideological prejudice, vested interests, and the authority of the [CPSU]', and could also encourage demands for social and political change. The Soviet leadership could no longer implement state terror on

[26] Harrison to Hayman, 6.3.68; R. Samuel to Hayman, 22.3.68; Smith to Hayman, 1.4.68, **FCO28/372**(PRO).

the Stalinist scale, but was obsessed with the suppression of internal opposition, however mild, and accused foreign governments and émigré groups of inspiring these dissidents.

In their external policies, the Soviets 'not only continue to profess but actually believe that it is their mission to spread world Communism'. Yet despite this goal the USSR's conduct of foreign policy was determined by 'a cool estimate of national self-interest', even when dealing with the West:

> The basis of the Soviet approach to the developed Western countries is still one of hostility. They seek to disintegrate Western alliances and are particularly concerned to create friction between the United States and other Western countries and to undermine NATO ... The Soviet Union is, however, ready to conclude specific and limited agreements with other countries even when maintaining a broadly hostile front towards them or their governments. Thus Khrushchev concluded a partial nuclear test ban treaty, and the Russians wish to conclude a non-proliferation treaty.

Moscow hoped to develop trading links and technological exchange agreements with the West in order to enhance the USSR's economic base, but opposed any genuine cultural contacts or exchanges of ideas - this was demonstrated by the Soviet response to the proposed 'friendship treaty'. While expressing their concerns over supposed Western-inspired 'subversion' within the Communist world, the Soviets were actively involved in spying on Western countries - there were an estimated 120 officers of the KGB and GRU (Soviet military intelligence) in the Soviet embassy and other missions in the UK. Western states should not allow any notion of 'getting on with the Russians' to obscure the fact that the Soviets 'regard concessions as a sign of weakness, unless they result from hard bargaining'. When seeking any agreement with the USSR, '[the] test should be

whether a given act of co-operation benefits the Western side as well as the Soviet side'.

Moscow was still determined to avoid a nuclear war, and NATO blocked Soviet expansionism in Europe. Furthermore, the Chinese threat could force a change in the USSR's foreign policy, although it was unlikely that the Soviets would adopt a less hostile approach towards the Western world in the short-term. *Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* referred to the Foreign Office's concept of evolution, stating that:

> There is an analogy to be made between the internal and external attitudes of the Soviet Union. Internally, the regime has been obliged to re-examine its policies because of the facts of life, [namely] the irresistible demands of an industrially developing society. There is a reasonable hope that in the long run the facts of life will lead to similar modifications in Soviet external attitudes.

In the immediate future, however, 'Soviet propaganda and the way in which the Russians are conducting themselves towards us reflect their hope that the United Kingdom ... may be vulnerable to pressures', and as such Soviet doctrine would 'exaggerate' the possibility of exploiting Britain's economic difficulties in order to alter British foreign policy in Moscow's favour. Gromyko's blunt statement that a 'treaty of friendship' was incompatible with Britain's NATO membership was interpreted as an affront to British prestige - 'This sort of language ... has in the past been used by the Russians with Norway and Denmark, but not with us'.

Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe recommended that policy towards Eastern Europe should remain unchanged. Britain should continue to encourage 'evolution' through bilateral contacts, without openly seeking to set East European states against Moscow. However, with regards to the USSR the paper called for a change in tone in Anglo-Soviet relations. Trade and technological exchanges were acceptable provided that the UK as well as the USSR profited as a result. Britain should remain committed to *détente*, but 'should also be careful not to appear to be running after' the Soviets in its efforts to reach agreement. Ministerial visits should be 'directed to a specific practical purpose', rather than for nebulous concepts of creating 'goodwill', and a similar criteria should be applied to Soviet Ministerial visits to the UK. The British government should respond 'clearly, firmly and seriously' whenever the USSR 'addresses itself to us officially in terms which show less than proper respect', and public opinion should be discreetly appraised of 'the subversive and repressive aspects of the Soviet regime', in particular the KGB's domestic role and its activities in the West. In this respect the Foreign Office felt, despite Harrison's remarks, that 'a generally false picture of the Soviet Union and its intentions' gave the latter 'opportunities to attack not only the interests but even the security' of the UK.[27]

The only Minister to openly criticise these conclusions was Benn, who was particularly proud of the agreement he had concluded with Kirillin, and contemptuous of what he dismissed as the entrenched hostility of the Foreign

[27] OPD(68)45, *Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, 17.6.68, **CAB148/37**(PRO). This is also in *DBPO III, I*, pp.48-57.

Office and the intelligence services towards the USSR.[28] Although his diaries give the opposite impression, Benn was not alone in supporting bilateral scientific and commercial contacts with the Soviet bloc, but his naïve views on the USSR made him unique among Wilson's Ministers. Three days before the technological agreement was signed, Benn told Kirillin that Britain was 'an isolated country whose relations with the United States were now somewhat strained and who had been locked out of Europe, and therefore Soviet friendship was of great importance'. The Minister of Technology considered *Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* to be 'barely post-Dulles' in its outlook, and in Cabinet on 20 June he passed a note to Crossman, arguing that the OPD paper should be discussed by the whole Cabinet. The latter responded with a note with the simple statement 'Pure Cold War', but otherwise took no action.[29]

The Minister of Technology's idiosyncratic views on East-West relations aside, by mid-1968 British Ministers and officials blamed the decline in Anglo-Soviet relations on Moscow's ideological stridency. Goronwy Roberts epitomised this view when he told the Foreign Secretary that Soviet propaganda would continue to heap abuse on the UK and other Western powers, as the *Politburo* required 'some cry of external danger to consolidate their public opinion and their own alliance'. In response, the British government had to 'meet toughness with toughness. Utter clarity, bordering on crudity, pays with the Russians'.[30] At the time Roberts wrote these words, relations between Czechoslovakia's pro-reform

[28] Benn, *Office Without Power*, 19.1.68, p.21; 3.6.68, p.74; 5.6.68, p.77.
[29] Benn, *Office Without Power*, 16.1.68, p.18. Note dated 20.6.68, p.84.
[30] G. Roberts to Stewart, 13.6.68, **FCO28/54**(PRO).

government and its WTO allies had deteriorated drastically. While Stewart's subordinates stressed the need for 'toughness' and 'clarity' in bilateral contacts with Moscow whenever British and Soviet interests clashed, London's response to the Czechoslovak crisis was noticeably restrained.

British policy and the 'Prague Spring': January-August 1968.

The ambassadorial conference on Eastern bloc affairs in April-May 1966 had concluded with the majority of participants expressing confidence in the prospects for the internal 'evolution' of Eastern Europe. However, the British ambassador to Prague's annual report for 1967 showed that as far as Czechoslovakia was concerned, such confidence was misplaced. The ambassador, William Barker, described the Novotny regime's record as 'dismal'. In foreign affairs, Prague had merely 'parroted' the Soviet line on Germany, Vietnam and the Middle East, and had undermined Britain's efforts to promote a European 'declaration of principles'. The Czechoslovak economy was in dire need of both de-centralisation and an input of Western technology, but the hard currency earnings needed to purchase the latter required competitive, efficient businesses free of inefficient central economic planning or CMEA ties. The problem was that the conservatives within the CPCS were unwilling to implement the reforms which Ota Sik and other radical economists had proposed two years previously.[31] Like other Western diplomats, Barker regarded the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia as a

[31] W. Barker to Brown, 9.1.68, **FCO28/89**(PRO). Renner, *Czechoslovakia*, pp.37-38.

backward-looking lackey of Moscow, and no one in London, Washington or any other Western capital foresaw the consequences of Novotny's downfall.

Barker's initial assessment was that Novotny had not been overthrown because of his tyranny, but because of his mishandling of the Czechoslovak economy. Dubcek, Cernik, Svoboda and their colleagues were still dedicated Communists, who showed no solid commitment to internal reform. In fact, Novotny's enemies included not only the more liberal-minded members of the CPCS, but hard-line conservatives too. Dubcek was only appointed as Novotny's successor because he was a compromise candidate initially acceptable to both reformers and conservatives alike.[32] In response, Hayman maintained that Novotny's downfall was due to his authoritarian methods, and that Dubcek was personally committed to domestic reform. Hayman agreed with Barker that while the new leadership maintained that there would be no change to its foreign policy, socio-economic change within Czechoslovakia could threaten both the CPCS's monopoly of power and Prague's allegiance to Moscow. He concluded that the 'big question' was whether Dubcek could control popular pressure for internal reforms, or whether domestic support for change would become 'a tide ... which will either carry him along or drown him'. Hayman expressed the hope that 'things do not go so far and so fast that the situation in Czechoslovakia becomes intolerable to the Russians' and others Soviet bloc states.[33]

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[32] W. Barker to Hayman, 26.3.68, **FCO28/90**(PRO). Renner, *Czechoslovakia*, pp.41-50. Skilling, *Interrupted Revolution*, pp.161-179.
[33] Hayman to W. Barker, 4.4.68, **FCO28/90**(PRO).

Hayman's conclusions epitomised the tone of Foreign Office assessments throughout the Prague Spring, highlighting one of the paradoxes of the departmental attitude towards 'evolution' in Eastern Europe. British officials hoped that in the long-term Eastern bloc states would assert their independence and loosen their economic and military ties to the USSR, but also wished this process to be a gradual one, controlled by the East European regimes rather than being driven by popular protest. In Gorowny Roberts' words to Stewart in June 1968, the Foreign Office presumed that 'the present ferment of thought will undoubtedly humanise [the] internal policy and external attitudes' of the Eastern bloc governments, but British interests would not be served by a revolution similar to that in Hungary in 1956, as 'it is not change by major disturbances that we wish to see but an evolution of effective co-existence' between East and Western European countries.[34] As a consequence, the UK adopted a low profile throughout the Czechoslovak crisis, avoiding any gesture which could be represented as 'driving wedges' between Moscow and Prague. It was for this reason that the Foreign Office ruled out another approach to the Czechoslovaks concerning the 'declaration of principles'.[35]

The Americans were also concerned that Dubcek's attempts at internal reform could backfire and antagonise the Soviet leadership. The US ambassador to Prague, Jacob Beam, optimistically concluded that unlike the Hungarians in 1956, the Czechoslovaks would be pragmatic enough to pursue internal reform gradually.

[34] G. Roberts to Stewart. 13.6.68, **FCO28/54**(PRO).
[35] W. Barker to Hayman, 8.4.68; & Hayman to W. Barker, 17.4.68, **FCO28/98**(PRO).

However, Rusk believed that while the Soviets tolerated Romania's wayward foreign policy because Ceausescu's regime was 'stable and its internal policies unobjectionable', Czechoslovakia had 'democratic traditions' and shared a border with the FRG. Any concessions towards democratisation made by Dubcek could eventually lead to Czechoslovakia's defection from the Soviet bloc.[36] This was precisely what worried the Soviet leadership and the more hard-line of their allies. At the WTO meeting in Dresden (23 March 1968) Dubcek and Cernik were assailed by Brezhnev, Gomulka and Ulbricht for their commitment to reform and their negligence in the face of the 'counter-revolutionary' threat to Communist rule. The Soviets, East Germans and Poles were concerned with the future of both the CPCS, and Czechoslovakia's alignment with its WTO and CMEA partners. The Bulgarians and, more reluctantly, the Hungarians subsequently sided with Moscow in waging a 'war of nerves' against Prague throughout the spring and summer of 1968.[37]

The response of Britain and the other Western powers to the crisis over Czechoslovakia was affected by the tensions which had arisen within the Atlantic Alliance since March 1966. NATO members had agreed to the Harmel study's conclusions in December 1967, which emphasised the Alliance's collective role in pursuing *détente* with the Eastern bloc. Following on from the Harmel report, the NATO ministerial meeting at Reykjavik (June 1968) formally proposed negotiations with the WTO on mutual and balanced force reductions in Europe. As

[36] Prague to State Dept, No.1667, 25.3.68; & State Dept to Prague, No.1627, 21.2.68, in *Soviet Flashpoints* document collection, *Czechoslovakia 1968*, boxes 6-7, National Security Archive, George Washington University.
[37] Excepts from record of Dresden meeting, 23.3.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.64-72.

John McGinn argues, Alliance members were 'anxious to avoid conspicuous declarations of support for the Prague Spring' which would antagonise the Soviets and raise East-West tensions. The Reykjavik declaration was also a response to domestic pressure within Western countries for unilateral troop reductions in Central Europe.[38] Due to the Western world's political and socio-economic problems, the general interest in *détente* and the mood in Britain and other countries for retrenchment in defence, NATO powers followed what McGinn calls a policy of 'collective inaction' over Czechoslovakia, being anxious not to provide any justification for Soviet propaganda attacks of 'imperialist' interference in the Prague Spring. The West Germans in particular shied away from any gesture which could be seen as provoking Warsaw Pact accusations of 'revanchist' plotting. No Western power was prepared to do more than issue a 'gentle warning' to the Soviets that intervention in Czechoslovakia could harm *détente*.[39] Significantly, the Czechoslovaks never asked the Western powers for any support - moral or practical - as their relations with their 'fraternal allies' deteriorated.

British diplomats were aware of the significance of the Dresden meeting, and Guy Millard, the ambassador to Budapest, commented that even the more reform-minded Hungarians were worried that the Czechoslovaks could go too far. Harrison guessed that Prague was reviewing its foreign trade policy and was interested in increased commercial links with the West, and presumed that the

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[38] J. C. McGinn, 'The Politics of Collective Inaction. NATO's Response to the Prague Spring', in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 1/3 (1999), pp.112-123, pp.126-127. NSC587th meeting, 5.6.68, **NSF**, NSC meetings (1-2), LBJLIB. Williams, *Senate*, pp.155-159. OPD(68)42, *British Policy in the event of US force withdrawals from Europe*, 20.6.68, **CAB148/37**(PRO).

[39] McGinn, 'Collective Inaction', pp.130-131, p.134. Bushell (UKDelNATO) to Smith, 28.3.68, **FCO28/22**. D. Laskey (Bonn) to Stewart, 4.5.68, **FCO28/30**(PRO).

Dresden meeting was intended to stop the Czechoslovaks from loosening their economic ties with the CMEA. In fact, while reformers in the CPCS hoped to develop trade with Western countries, there were also calls from within the Czechoslovak military for the adoption of a 'national' defence doctrine. Harrison believed that while Soviet military intervention was unlikely, Moscow could use economic sanctions to force Czechoslovakia back into obedience.[40] One Foreign Office assessment from late April commented that the main problem for Dubcek was not the 'over-enthusiasm of the reformers' but the 'continued existence of latent conservatism' within the CPCS. Dubcek was expected to defeat his hard-line opponents in the forthcoming Party Congress, but he still had to appease the USSR. The Soviets were alarmed at the possibility of Czechoslovakia pursuing an independent foreign policy, and feared that the Prague Spring could infect the GDR, Poland and other bloc states.[41] The consequences of the Action Programme for Eastern Europe assumed a significant part in the meeting of British ambassadors to the Eastern bloc states, which was convened in London in early May 1968.

One of the conclusions the Foreign Office reached during its review of Anglo-Soviet relations was that Britain 'should be giving more attention to Eastern European countries other than the Soviet Union', and in March arrangements were made for Stewart to visit Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria in late August-early

[40] Millard to Hayman, 20.3.68; & Harrison to Hayman, 27.3.68, **FCO28/47**(PRO). Loth, 'Moscow, Prague and Warsaw', p.106.
[41] T. Barker, *East-West Relations. Office Meeting with the Secretary of State*, 26.4.68, **FCO28/47**(PRO).

September 1968.[42] On the first day (7 May) of the ambassadors conference the Foreign Secretary commented on the 'intellectual restlessness' throughout Eastern Europe, and he asked the assembled diplomats if there were any signs of 'fundamental change' behind the Iron Curtain. In contrast with the previous conference (April 1966), participants were less optimistic concerning the prospects for reform in Eastern Europe, commenting on the hard-line nature of the Polish, East German and Bulgarian regimes. John Chadwick, the ambassador to Bucharest, stated that while Ceausescu had defied Moscow by opening diplomatic relations with Bonn, Romania was 'internally the most Stalinist [state] in Eastern Europe', and was unlikely to undergo its own version of the Prague Spring. Millard stressed that despite the NEM reforms, the Hungarian leadership was in no mood to risk another 1956-style upheaval, and would neither leave the WTO or request the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Harrison stressed that while nationalism was a 'liberalising force' in Eastern Europe, nationalist sentiment was a tool of conservative patriotism in the USSR - evidently, he was referring to Russian nationalism rather than that of the Ukrainians, Balts or other non-Russian nationalities. The only hope for the 'evolution' of the USSR's domestic and external policies required the Soviet peoples to be more active in pressing for socio-economic reforms, but Harrison saw few signs of such a change in the short-term.

Barker stated that despite the 'Action Programme', the Dubcek regime remained unstable, and the reformers had yet to overcome the strong conservative

[42] Smith to Hayman, 19.3.68; Smith to Millard, 16.4.68, **FCO28/38**(PRO).

element within the CPCS. Developments in Czechoslovakia had, nonetheless, shown that economic failure could force changes in even the most doctrinaire of Communist states. Czechoslovakia's priority was to reform the centrally-planned economy. Prague had publicly reaffirmed its allegiance to the USSR, but had declared that Czechoslovakia's foreign policy would focus primarily on Central European affairs. Barker concluded that Czechoslovakia would not pursue a Romanian-style foreign policy because of the need to focus upon internal reforms. For their part, there was little the Soviets and their allies could do to put pressure on the Czechoslovaks, as economic sanctions would merely force the latter to develop closer commercial links with the West.[43]

At the last meeting on 10 May, the participants concluded that there was 'little the West could do or say to help the liberals in Eastern Europe', except to continue to encourage East-West trade and technological co-operation. Harrison asserted that:

> [The] ferment in Czechoslovakia must have serious implications for the Kremlin, both internally and externally. He was sure that the Soviet regime would be able to control internal disturbances, but he wondered what effect the developments in Czechoslovakia would have on the Soviet Union's foreign policy. If the Czechoslovaks succeed in working out a distinctive road to socialism, this would have important ideological implications for the Soviet leadership, Eastern Europe as a *bloc*, for the Warsaw Pact in relation to Germany, and for the World Communist movement. These developments were touching very serious nerves in the Kremlin. The Russians must now be considering whether the implications were so serious that the Czechoslovak deviation must be crushed, or whether they should live with it and restrict as far as they could the damage which it might do to their position.[44]

[43] *Ambassadors Conference*, 1st & 2nd meetings, 7.5.68, **FCO28/45**(PRO).
[44] *Ambassador's Conference*, 10th meeting, 10.5.68, *DBPO III, I*, pp.42-48.

The ambassador's conference reflected the British approach to the Czechoslovak crisis as a whole. The participants concurred with Stewart's conclusion that the existing policy of encouraging 'evolution' through trade and cultural contacts should be maintained, and that Western countries should not 'make use of present trends in Eastern Europe to drive wedges between Czechoslovakia and other East European countries'.[45] Barker reinforced this low-profile policy with his despatches from Prague, and the British government maintained this approach despite pressure from MPs and popular opinion to give the Czechoslovaks moral support against Soviet pressure. The Foreign Office also remained convinced that despite threats from Moscow the Soviets would not use military force against Czechoslovakia.[46]

During the late spring and summer of 1968, the USSR and its hard-line allies grew increasingly agitated over the democratisation of Czechoslovakia. The relaxation of censorship and the emergence of independent civil society groups were regarded in Moscow, East Berlin, Warsaw and Sofia as evidence of 'counter-revolutionary' activity. The Soviet, East German, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian leaders met in Moscow on 8 May to discuss how to rally the CPCS conservatives (the so-called 'healthy forces') against Dubcek. Although Kadar half-heartedly tried to defend the Czechoslovak leadership, Brezhnev, Gomulka, Ulbricht and the Bulgarian leader, Todor Zhivkov, openly favoured the use of coercion in support of the 'healthy forces'.[47] Thereafter, the leaders of these states (referred to as the

[45] *Ambassadors Conference*, 3rd & 4th meetings, 8.5.68, **FCO28/45**(PRO). Hayman to Harrison, 30.5.68, **FCO28/46**(PRO).
[46] W. Barker to Stewart, 6.5.68, **FCO28/90**(PRO). Hayman to W. Barker, 1.8.68, **FCO28/49**(PRO). FO/CRO to Missions, No.71(Guidance), 15.3.68, **PREM13/2114**(PRO).
[47] Excerpts from Moscow meeting, 8.5.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.132-143.

'Five') proceeded to apply pressure on the Czechoslovaks by staging a series of military manoeuvres, culminating in a major command-post exercise on Czechoslovak soil (code-named *Sumava*) in late June. Prior to *Sumava*, no Soviet troops were stationed in Czechoslovakia, but during the course of the 'exercise' 25-30,000 Soviet soldiers entered the country, with the bulk remaining even after *Sumava* concluded on 30 June. As David Miller states, in any invasion the main problems to overcome are 'command-and-control, telecommunications and logistics, together with transport, movement control and supplies'. Another significant indicator, overlooked by Western intelligence services, was the call-up of thousands of Soviet reservists and the staging of manoeuvres at a time when Eastern bloc states used troops to gather in the summer harvest. The staging of *Sumava*, the delayed troop withdrawals, and the *Niemen* exercise staged in the Western USSR in late July were intended both to threaten Prague and to rehearse for intervention against Czechoslovakia.[48]

On the 14-15 July, the leaders of the 'Five' met at Warsaw, issuing an ultimatum to the CPCS leadership known as the 'Warsaw letter'. The Czechoslovaks were bluntly warned that their domestic policies were 'no longer your affair alone'. If the process of democratisation was not halted, then Czechoslovakia's fraternal allies would intervene to crush what they regarded as a threat to the survival of Communism.[49] Harrison stated that that the USSR had made it clear that they would not tolerate 'the disruption of its dominance in

[48] Dawisha, *Prague Spring*, pp.96-97, p.116, pp.130-133. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.243-244. D. Miller, *The Cold War. A Military History*, (London; Pimlico 2001), p.60.
[49] Excerpts from Warsaw meeting & 'Warsaw letter', 14-15.7.68, pp.212-233, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.234-238.

Eastern Europe', irrespective of international opinion. Both ambassador and the *chargé* in Moscow, Peter Dalton, doubted that the Soviets would invade Czechoslovakia, but suggested that Moscow could engineer an 'internal coup' by the CPCS hard-liners prior to the party congress in September.[50] Barker observed that the 'Five' had failed to intimidate the Czechoslovaks, and that Dubcek had held his own against the conservatives. The ambassador to Prague, who was now more convinced of Dubcek's reformist credentials, expected that the Czechoslovak reformers would hold their ground with moral support from the Romanians and Yugoslavs, and he wrongly presumed that the Hungarians would tolerate a controlled programme of internal reform. Foreign Office officials concluded that while the Warsaw letter demonstrated that the Prague Spring was 'completely unacceptable' to Czechoslovakia's fraternal allies, the latter were unlikely to intervene. The Soviets and their allies would nonetheless continue to put pressure on Prague through military manoeuvres and by encouraging the CPCS hard-liners to resist Dubcek. Although Palliser commented that 'the temptations to which Russia is exposed are very great', the consensus within the Foreign Office was that the Soviets would 'bully and cajole, bribe and threaten [the Czechoslovaks] until they got the stabilisation of a regime they could live with'.[51]

Despite this assessment that 'the Russians would try to avoid direct military intervention in Czechoslovakia', the British sought through their

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[50] Moscow to FO, No.1108, 11.7.68; & No.1138, 18.7.68, **PREM13/1993**(PRO). P. Dalton (Moscow) to Smith, 23.7.68, **FCO28/48**(PRO). Renner, *Czechoslovakia*, p.60.
[51] Prague to FO, No.370, 15.7.68, **PREM13/1993**(PRO). T. Barker to Hayman, 18.7.68, **FCO28/47**(PRO). Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.251.

Washington embassy to consult with the Americans as to whether the Western powers could take action to deter such an outcome. Both governments agreed that there were few feasible options. The Foreign Office concluded that discussions within NATO would be seen as provocative, and that Western military assistance to the Czechoslovaks was out of the question. British officials were also reluctant to threaten political and economic retaliation, and were not prepared to renounce efforts to promote *détente* if the Prague Spring was crushed by force. At a Cabinet meeting on 18 July, both Healey and Stewart maintained that Britain and its allies would be powerless to intervene if the Soviets invaded.[52] Like the British, the Americans were reluctant to inflame the situation in Eastern Europe, and although McNamara's successor, Clark Clifford, suggested at a National Security Council (NSC) meeting in late April that the Soviets might resort to force to prevent the spread of the nationalist 'virus' in Eastern Europe, the State Department considered Soviet intervention to be unlikely. Johnson himself was more concerned with Vietnam and plans for a long-awaited summit with the Soviets than with Czechoslovakia, and the President ruled out using the hot-line to warn Moscow of the implications of intervention.[53] The Czechoslovaks were aware that, in Cernik's own words, 'the capitalist countries [did] not wish for a radical turn in the situation' in Czechoslovakia. In his comments to the CPCS leadership on 27 July, Cernik stated that the USA, France, West Germany and Italy all considered Czechoslovakia to be 'in the Soviet "sphere of influence"' and had adopted 'a cautiously neutral official position' as tensions between Prague and the

[52] FO to Washington, No.1948(Saving), 22.7.68; & Washington to FO, No.100(Saving), 27.7.68, **FCO28/99**(PRO). Crossman III, 18.7.68, pp.142-145.
[53] Memorandum by N. Davis on NSC meeting dated 24.4.68, *FRUS XVII*, pp.69-71.

'Five' intensified. It is a significant comment on the British approach to the Prague Spring that in his summary of Western attitudes the Czechoslovak Premier did not even refer in passing to Britain.[54]

The West's 'collective inaction' was partly intended not to provide any corroboration for Soviet allegations of 'imperialist' subversion, which intensified after an arms cache was 'discovered' in Western Bohemia in late July. Moscow claimed that the weapons were planted by the CIA, an accusation which led Rusk to summon Dobrynin to his office for a dressing-down. Responding to an enquiry from Wilson, the Foreign Office commented that neither the Americans nor the West Germans were willing risk the consequences that covert operations in Czechoslovakia would entail. According to British intelligence sources, the Czechoslovaks believed that the East Germans had planted the arms, although the Foreign Office correctly presumed that the weapons cache was a KGB provocation intended to give substance to Moscow's propaganda attacks.[55] While waging a 'war of nerves' against Dubcek, the Soviets also maintained that they had no intention of intervening in Czechoslovakia. On 30 July, Stewart told Smirnovsky that while Britain would not interfere in the internal affairs of any East European state, 'if events went badly over Czechoslovakia, the opportunities for increasing understanding' between the UK and USSR 'would be frozen'.[56] These comments were as far as the British government were prepared to go in issuing any warning

[54] Report by Cernik to CPCS *Praesidium*, 27.7.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.281-283.
[55] Washington to FO, No.2245, 23.7.68; Palliser to Day, 29.7.68; & Day to Palliser, 1.8.68, **PREM13/1993**(PRO). Andrews & Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archives*, pp.7-8, p.333.
[56] PM to Palliser, 20.7.68; Palliser to Maitland, 22.7.68; & FO to Moscow, No.2026, 30.7.68, **PREM13/1993**(PRO).

against Soviet intervention. Similar 'gentle warnings' from other Western governments clearly convinced the Soviets that the West would do nothing to help the Czechoslovak reformers.

From 29 July to 1 August the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaderships met at the border town of Cierna-nad-Tisou. The only agreement reached at Cierna was that both sides should meet again, along with the other four signatories of the 'Warsaw letter', at Bratislava on 3 August. Following the Bratislava meeting, the Czechoslovaks and the 'Five' issued a declaration containing the standard denunciation of 'the aggressive forces of imperialism', and stressing the need for solidarity within the Warsaw Pact. However, the Bratislava declaration also stated that 'each fraternal party' could determine 'all questions of further socialist development' in their countries, 'taking into account specific national features and conditions'.[57] Barker informed London that the Bratislava declaration represented a solution to the Czechoslovak crisis. Dubcek and his colleagues had renewed their 'vows' to their WTO allies in order to continue their reform programmes, yet the ambassador doubted that the Czechoslovaks had made any pledges to reverse the process of democratisation, and concluded that Prague had kept its nerve despite threats from the 'Five'. Barker suggested that the Soviets presumed that after twenty years of subservience the Czechoslovaks would be easy to bully into obedience, but despite the threatening military manoeuvres and the 'brutal ultimatum' contained in the Warsaw letter, Prague remained committed to internal

[57] Excerpts from the Cierna negotiations, 29.7.68; & Bratislava Declaration, 3.8.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.284-297, pp.328-329. Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, pp.334-336.

reform. The ambassador was confident that the CPCS hard-liners would be routed in the September party congress, after which Dubcek could progress with his reforms.[58]

In contrast, Harrison stated that Moscow was bent upon overthrowing the reformers. If Czechoslovakia defected from the Warsaw Pact, the strategic and political implications for the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe would be catastrophic. However, Moscow's efforts to coerce Prague had backfired. The Czechoslovaks had stood their ground, and if the Soviets used force to crush reform in Czechoslovakia, their international reputation would be irreparably damaged. Yet if Moscow did not intervene, Dubcek would triumph and the Soviet leadership would be humiliated. Harrison noted Brezhnev's apparent indecision over how to respond to the Prague Spring, and asserted that middle-ranking CPSU apparatchiks had already shown signs of impatience with the leadership's dithering during the Six Day War. The ambassador to Moscow suggested that if Brezhnev did not take control of the situation in Czechoslovakia, he could suffer the same fate as Khrushchev.[59]

Despite Harrison's assessment, the British government, like its allies, still believed that the Soviets were unlikely to invade Czechoslovakia. Wilson, Stewart and the Foreign Office were unaware of the sharp deterioration of personal relations between Brezhnev and Dubcek following the Bratislava meeting, as shown

[58] W. Barker to Stewart, 12.8.68, **FCO28/49**(PRO).
[59] Harrison to Stewart, 22.8.68, **FCO28/49**(PRO).

by the hostile tone of their telephone conversations. The Western powers were also unaware that during the Bratislava meeting Vasil Bilak, one of the leading CPCS conservatives, passed a 'letter of invitation' to Brezhnev from the 'healthy forces', requesting Soviet military intervention.[60] On 17 August, the Soviet *Politburo* decided to authorise the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which was given the code-name Operation *Danube*.[61] On the night of the 20-21 August, Soviet paratroopers landed in Prague, while an army of about 250,000 Soviet, East German, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian troops invaded Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak armed forces offered no resistance, and Dubcek, Cernik and other leading reformers were arrested and taken to Moscow.[62] Within the course of a day, Czechoslovakia was under total military occupation.

The end of the 'Prague Spring': August 1968-April 1969.

The decision to invade Czechoslovakia was the result of several factors. Kieran Williams argues that until mid-August 1968 the Soviet leadership was still prepared to give Dubcek the benefit of the doubt, believing that the Czechoslovak leadership had promised at Cierna and Bratislava that the Action Programme would be halted and reversed. When the Czechoslovaks did not follow up these meetings by re-imposing state censorship and cracking down on the 'counter-

[60] Telephone conversations between Brezhnev & Dubcek, 9.8.68 & 13.8.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.336-338, pp.345-356. See also 'A Letter to Brezhnev: The Czech Hardliners "Request" for Soviet Intervention. August 1968', *CWIHP Bulletin*, 2 (1992), p.16.
[61] Excerpts from *Politburo* meeting, 17.8.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.376-383.
[62] See J. Valenta, 'From Prague to Kabul. The Soviet Style of Invasion', in *International Security*, 5/2 (1980) pp.133-134, on the strategy behind Operation *Danube*.

revolutionaries', the Soviets and the other members of the 'Five' decided that Dubcek could no longer be trusted, and that the 'counter-revolution' in Czechoslovakia could only be crushed by external intervention.[63] Harrison's argument concerning the threat to Brezhnev from hard-liners within the Kremlin resembled the conclusions drawn by one of Dubcek's supporters, Zdenek Mlynar, who asserted that the CPSU General Secretary was obliged to sanction intervention to stay in power. Yet Brezhnev's telephone conversations with Dubcek in mid-August show how concerned he was at the threat of 'counter-revolution' in Czechoslovakia. If Brezhnev believed that the survival of 'socialism' in Eastern Europe was at stake, he would have readily agreed with 'hard-liners' that military intervention was a necessity. Karen Dawisha argues that Kosygin would have opposed the invasion because of its potential impact on *détente* and on economic reform. The Soviet Premier was initially sceptical of the ability of the 'healthy forces' to seize power, but at the Cierna meeting he was particularly uncompromising in his condemnation of Dubcek's reforms. The records of the *Politburo*'s meetings from 14-17 August 1968 remain inaccessible, but given his antipathy towards the Czechoslovak 'counter-revolutionaries' Kosygin would probably have given his consent to the intervention.[64]

Among the hard-liners advocating intervention was the USSR's ambassador to Prague, Stepan Chervonenko, who informed Moscow that the only means of

[63] K. Williams, 'Political Loves' Labours Lost: Negotiations between Prague and Moscow in 1968', in *Slovo*, 7/1 (1994), pp.72-87.
[64] Dawisha, *Prague Spring*, pp.300-302. Zdenek Mlynar, *Night Frost in Prague*, (London; C. Hurst 1980), p.163, p.168. For Brezhnev & Kosygin's attitudes, see the Cierna negotiations & Brezhnev-Dubcek telephone conversations in *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.284-297, pp.336-338, pp.345-356.

preventing 'counter-revolution' was to support a hard-line coup against Dubcek.[65] According to Mark Kramer, both the Soviet military and the KGB supported intervention, the former being concerned by the fact that there were no Soviet troops permanently stationed in Czechoslovakia. Andropov had been ambassador to Budapest during the 1956 revolution, and was determined to prevent the collapse of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia over a decade later. The KGB had close contacts with the StB, whose officers assisted the invaders, while the hard-line commanders of the Czechoslovak armed forces ensured that *Danube* faced no resistance. Another significant figure was the Ukrainian Communist Party secretary, Petro Shelest, who feared that the Prague Spring could spill over into his republic. Shelest was Brezhnev's principal contact with Bilak and other CPCS conservatives, and played a key role in conveying the 'letter of invitation' to the Soviet leadership. Kramer argues that Andropov, Chervonenko and Shelest contributed to 'the *Politburo*'s mistaken impression that a viable hard-line alternative existed in Czechoslovakia'. Moscow's intention was that Operation *Danube* would take place concurrently with an internal coup, in which Bilak and his associates would overthrow Dubcek and his fellow reformers.[66]

Yet although Operation *Danube* was a military success, it was a political failure. The so-called 'healthy forces' were incapable of going beyond mere plotting, and although Prague was under Soviet military control, the CPCS

[65] See Prague to Moscow, 7.8.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.333-335. Valenta, 'Prague to Kabul', p.126.
[66] M. Kramer, 'The Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia: New Interpretations', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 3 (1993), pp.2-10; & 'Ukraine and the Soviet-Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 (Part 1): New Evidence from the Diary of Petro Shelest', in *CWIHP Bulletin*, 10 (1998), pp.234-244.

Congress was convened in secret, issuing a statement condemning the invasion. This was an embarrassment to the Kremlin, which had instructed Soviet ambassadors in Western capitals to inform their host governments that the Czechoslovak government had appealed for intervention by its 'fraternal' allies. The WTO occupation force also had no means of dealing with the widespread passive resistance and popular hostility it faced across Czechoslovakia.[67] Having arrested Dubcek, Cernik and other pro-reform Communists, the Soviets discovered that they had no alternative leadership to install in Prague. As a result, Brezhnev and his colleagues browbeat the Czechoslovaks into accepting the demands outlined in the Moscow Protocol (26 August), which involved the re-introduction of censorship, the abolition of all civil society groups, an end to economic reform and the complete subordination of Czechoslovak foreign policy to Soviet interests. The protocol also gave no date for the withdrawal of the occupation forces.[68]

The minutes of the NSC meeting on 20 August show that the Americans had been caught unawares by Operation *Danube*. Rusk was particularly concerned that the Soviets could 'put pressure on the West' by provoking a new crisis over Berlin. The Americans faced a further problem because on the 19 August Dobrynin informed the Secretary of State that Moscow was prepared to receive Johnson during the first ten days of October.[69] The superpowers were due to issue a joint announcement on strategic arms negotiations on 21 August, but as a

[67] Dawisha, *Prague Spring*, pp.320-325. P. Windsor & A. Roberts, *Czechoslovakia 1968. Reform, Repression and Resistance*, (London; IISS 1969), pp.111-116.
[68] Excerpts from Moscow meeting between Soviet & Czechoslovak leaderships, 23.8.68; & Moscow protocol, 26.8.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.465-480.
[69] NSC589th meeting, 20.8.68, **NSF**, NSC meetings (1-2); & CAP82080, 19.8.68, W. Rostow Files 11, LBJLIB.

consequence of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Americans postponed this announcement.[70] After *Danube*, Johnson's officials were also worried that the Soviets could seek to settle scores with two other troublesome Communist states in Eastern Europe, Romania and Yugoslavia. On 20 September, Rusk warned the Soviet ambassador that any military action against Berlin, Romania or Yugoslavia would raise East-West tensions to dangerous levels. Dobrynin responded that the USSR wanted *détente*, but would not tolerate the break-up of the Warsaw Pact, and Rusk regarded these comments as an indication that the Soviets would take no further action in Eastern Europe.[71] In Moscow, Llewelyn Thompson argued that Soviet intentions were 'defensive', insofar as the USSR was determined to preserve Communist rule in Eastern Europe, and he doubted whether the Romanians or Yugoslavs were at risk of attack. Thompson also stated that the Soviet leadership was still interested in arms talks with the USA. However, having postponed strategic arms negotiations because of Czechoslovakia, Washington discovered - much to the President's dismay - that the Soviets preferred to wait until Johnson's successor entered office.[72]

London received no advance intelligence warning of Operation *Danube*, although members of the British military mission (BRIXMIS) based in East Berlin apparently concluded that Soviet and East German troop movements during the summer months indicated an intention to invade. BRIXMIS reported their conclusions to BAOR headquarters, but these warnings remained unheeded.

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[70] Clearwater, *Strategic Arms Control*, pp.390-393. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp.180-181.
[71] Conversations between Dobrynin & Rusk at State Dept, 20.9.68, **RG59**, 150, 64-65, 2664, NARAII.
[72] Moscow to State Dept, No.5775, 1.10.68, *Soviet Flashpoints*. Clearwater, *Arms Control*, pp.417-418.

According to Cradock, the DIS was divided as to whether the Soviets would intervene in Czechoslovakia, and as a consequence the JIC 'sat on the fence' when preparing its assessment on the prospects of intervention.[73] After the invasion Wilson, Stewart, Lord Chalfont (a Foreign Office Minister of State), Trend and Greenhill met at 10 Downing Street on 21 August to discuss its implications. The Foreign Secretary stated that '[the] situation did not represent an immediate threat to Western Europe', but constituted 'a return to 'cold war' conditions and was as such a grave setback to East-West relations'. Like the Johnson administration, the Wilson government tempered public condemnation with caution, and the meeting at Downing Street ended with agreement that Britain should confine itself to securing a UN resolution condemning the invasion. In the Cabinet the following day, the Foreign Secretary told his colleagues that 'our objective should be to obtain world-wide condemnation of the Soviet Union but to avoid being singled out as particularly hostile' by Moscow. This resort to a debate within the UN was similar to Western efforts to promote a resolution condemning the Soviet intervention in Hungary the previous decade. Britain and other Western powers attempted to pass a UN resolution condemning the invasion as a violation of international law, but the Soviets blocked the resolution with their veto.[74]

Unlike Rusk, Stewart concluded that the Soviets were unlikely to assault the Romanians and Yugoslavs, or to threaten West Berlin.[75] The Foreign

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[73] S. Dorril, *MI6*, (London; Fourth Estate 2001), p.727. T. Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, (HarperCollins 1997), pp.159-162. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.249.
[74] MISC(219)(69)1st meeting at No.10, 21.8.68, **CAB130/134**(PRO). CC(68)38th conclusions, 22.8.68, **CAB128/43**(PRO). Bekes, *Hungarian Revolution*, pp.17-21. Skilling, *Interrupted Revolution*, p.753, p.757.
[75] Conversation between G. de Courcel (French ambassador) & Stewart, 30.8.68, **PREM13/1994**(PRO).

Secretary's planned visits to Hungary and Bulgaria were cancelled, but his Romanian trip went ahead because Bucharest had condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion. Other Ministerial visits to the five 'aggressor' states were suspended and cultural exchanges curtailed. On the other hand, commercial trips were permitted 'if important business is involved'. Wilson retrospectively described Parliament's response to the invasion as 'impotent'. The same can be said of Britain and Western Europe's response to *Danube* which was, in particular, regarded as a fatal blow to de Gaulle's concept of *Europe totale*.[76] One less welcome consequence for the Soviets was that domestic political pressure in the USA and Western Europe for unilateral troop withdrawals from Germany diminished significantly.[77]

Harrison ended his service as ambassador to the USSR on 25 August, and the initial analyses sent by the Moscow embassy that September were written by Peter Dalton. The *chargé* argued that the invasion of Czechoslovakia did not signify a more aggressive Soviet foreign policy. Dalton depicted the *Politburo* as being 'a prisoner, rather than an instigator, of events' in Eastern Europe. The Soviet leadership had acted on an *ad hoc* basis, vacillating at the time of the Cierna and Bratislava negotiations, and taking the decision to invade on the assumption that there would be a hard-line coup in Prague. The Soviets had then discovered after the invasion that the Czechoslovaks were solidly behind Dubcek, and as a result had been obliged to negotiate with the very same leadership that

[76] FO to UKDelNATO, No.991(Saving), 27.8.68, **FCO28/49**(PRO). Wilson, *Labour Government*, p.553. Michel Debre, de Gaulle's Foreign Minister, reflected on France's inability to do more than protest over *Danube* in his memoirs, *Trois Républiques Pour Une France. Gouverner Autrement*, (Paris; Albin Michel), p.258.
[77] Duffield, *Power Rules*, pp.182-183. F. Costigliola, 'Lyndon B. Johnson, Germany and "the end of the Cold War"', in W. Cohen & N. B. Tucker, *Lyndon Johnson confronts the World. American Foreign Policy 1963-1968*, (NY; Columbia University Press 1994), p.208.

they had intended to overthrow. Dalton informed Stewart that the decision to intervene was 'not the action of strong "expansionist" leaders, but of frightened men reacting indecisively to a situation they knew to be dangerous, but which they did not know how to deal'. Moscow was determined that Czechoslovakia should neither defect to the 'imperialist' camp, nor become a 'neutral vacuum' susceptible to West German influence. In either case, the Communist regimes in both the GDR and Poland would be at risk. The USSR would suppress similar upsurges of dissidence throughout its East European sphere of influence, an observation confirmed by the enunciation of the 'Brezhnev doctrine' during the CPSU General Secretary's speech at the Polish Communist Party Congress (November 1968). Dalton acknowledged that the occupation force in Czechoslovakia enhanced the WTO's military capabilities in Central Europe, but concluded that the Soviets did not intent to attack NATO. The *chargé* also counselled against a strident Western response to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, arguing that 'a return to the 'cold war' could ... substantiate fears, revive suspicions and put relations back to where they were before all the patient work of recent years'.[78]

From Prague, Barker likewise observed on 25 August that the WTO intervention had been a political fiasco. The invaders had 'overestimated' the ability of the CPCS hard-liners to seize power and had 'underestimated the degree to which the Dubcek line corresponded with the aspirations of the Communist

[78] Dalton to Smith, 11.8.68 & 19.9.68; Dalton to Stewart, 29.9.68, **FCO28/69**(PRO). Dalton to Stewart, 30.9.68, *DPBO III, I*, pp.76-80.

Party's rank and file and the population as a whole'. The Soviets had to choose between resorting to outright military occupation, or the humiliation of having to negotiate with Dubcek. A month later, however, Barker's analysis was more pessimistic as far as the prospects of reform within Czechoslovakia were concerned. The Czechoslovaks had been forced by the Moscow protocol to renounce democratisation and economic reform. Barker also presumed that the Soviet military had 'at some point' in mid-August 'ceased to be a mindless tool and became a significant political force in its own right', forcing the *Politburo* to resort to force against Czechoslovakia.[79] Northern Department officials disagreed with this last comment, as did Dalton, who maintained that while the Soviet military may have favoured intervention the political leadership remained in control of the decision-making process. The *chargé* guessed, correctly, that the Soviet leadership made the decision to intervene on either the 17 or 18 August. Greenhill asserted that while the 'build-up of Soviet forces in certain sectors (e.g. Navy)' showed that Brezhnev was far more receptive to the military leadership's opinions than Khrushchev, there was no evidence to support Barker's hypothesis. The Northern Department also presumed that despite the Moscow Protocol, the apparent lack of a conservative alternative meant that the Soviets had to work with the existing leadership. Dubcek therefore had some opportunities to introduce moderate reforms, similar to those Kadar initiated in Hungary.[80]

[79] Prague to FO, No.562, 25.8.68, **PREM13/1994**(PRO). W. Barker to Stewart, 17.9.68, **FCO28/69**(PRO).
[80] Dalton to Stewart, 29.9.68; Smith to Hayman, 20.9.68; comments by Hayman (20.9.68) & Greenhill (23.9.68); Giffard to Hayman, 27.9.68, **FCO28/69**(PRO).

The JIC's assessment on the future of Eastern Europe after the Prague Spring, dated December 1968, conceded that the short term outlook for Czechoslovakia was 'bleak', but that despite the Soviet military occupation 'some elements of the Dubcek reform programme', including economic reform, 'will continue'.[81] This conclusion contradicted Barker's report to the Foreign Office on 30 August, which stated that:

> I think we must recognise that for practical purposes the Soviet takeover has been complete. All the key Ministries will have their quota of supervisory Russians or Soviet stooges; the cherished freedoms of the last seven months or so will be stamped upon; economic venturesomeness (sic) will be choked; co-operation with the West in the fields of trade, technology and culture will be limited; and politically the Czechoslovaks will have to learn again to parrot the Soviet Party and State lines without bothering to consider their own views or their own interests.[82]

Barker's grim prognosis was borne out by the course of events in the autumn and winter of 1968. On 16 October Prague and Moscow signed a treaty on the 'temporary' stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, and under the USSR's auspices the CPCS hard-liners gradually supplanted the reformers as part of the process of 'normalisation'.[83] The pretext for Dubcek's eventual removal was provided in late March 1969, when the Czechoslovak ice-hockey team beat the USSR in the world cup finals. KGB and StB *agents provocateurs* provoked riots in Prague in order to justify a Soviet crackdown. On 17 April, Dubcek was replaced as CPCS First Secretary by Gustav Husak, who set about restoring a regime as rigidly authoritarian and as slavishly pro-Soviet as that of Novotny. The British embassy in Prague reported that Husak was unpopular even in his native

[81] JIC(68)54(Final), *The Soviet Grip on Eastern Europe*, 2.12.68, **CAB158/71**(PRO).
[82] Smith to Hayman, 3.9.68 & 5.9.68; W. Barker to Hayman, 30.8.68, **FCO28/91**(PRO).
[83] Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, p.337. Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty, 16.10.68, *Prague Spring 1968*, pp.533-536. Renner, *Czechoslovakia*, pp.86-101

Slovakia, and that the Czechoslovaks had acquiesced in the change in leadership rather than risk Soviet repression. Yet Foreign Office officials considered the new leadership to be 'centrist rather than conservative', and clearly believed that the authoritarian crackdown was merely a temporary development.[84]

Conclusion:

The British and other Western governments responded cautiously to the Prague Spring and its brutal suppression, taking no action which could arouse Soviet anger and jeopardise East-West *détente*. It should be noted that NATO's treaty commitments involved collective defence, rather than assistance to Soviet clients seeking to exert their independence from the Eastern bloc. The general failure of Western powers to anticipate the suppression of the Prague Spring should be recognised, although this miscalculation reflected the problems involved in determining Soviet intentions, given the secretive nature of the decision-making process in the Kremlin. As noted above, the *Politburo* only made the final decision to intervene in Czechoslovakia three days before Operation *Danube* took place.

The Soviets were confident that the invasion of Czechoslovakia would not significantly raise tensions in Europe, and Moscow was ready to risk Western protests as the price to pay for preserving Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe.

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[84] Crampton, *Eastern Europe*, p.338. Andrews & Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive*, pp.342-343. Prague to FCO, 18.4.69; & Day to E. Youde (No.10), 18.4.69, **PREM13/2553**(PRO).

George Brown criticised NATO's response to the Czechoslovak crisis, and he argued in November 1968 that the Alliance powers should have explicitly warned the Soviets against intervention in Czechoslovakia's domestic affairs. This, he argued, would have encouraged Kosygin and other 'doves' to veto the invasion. However, Brown did not say what he thought the Western allies should do if the USSR had called their bluff and still invaded. It is also doubtful that Brown would have adopted such a tough approach had he still been Foreign Secretary.[85] The harsh fact was that Britain and other Western powers were above all concerned that the *status quo* in Europe should be preserved. NATO members were not prepared to risk either the Alliance's credibility or the intensification of East-West rivalries by making unsolicited pledges to support Czechoslovakia.

Britain's muted response to the Czechoslovak crisis reflected the Foreign Office consensus that Western powers should not be seen to be encouraging East European states to challenge Soviet authority. Although this was a consistent feature of British policy towards the Eastern bloc during the 1960s, Foreign Office officials had also concluded in early 1968 that Anglo-Soviet relations had suffered as a result of the USSR's lack of goodwill. The implications of this assessment will be examined subsequently.

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[85] Dawisha, *Prague Spring*, pp.355-356. George Brown, 'How we could have stopped the Russians', in *The Evening Standard*, 14.11.68, & 'Alas the Brinkmanship was Missing', in *The Evening Standard*, 15.11.68. T. Barker to Hayman, 15.11.68, **FCO28/69**(PRO).

CHAPTER 9: 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' ? ANGLO-SOVIET AND EAST-WEST RELATIONS AFTER CZECHOSLOVAKIA, OCTOBER 1968-JUNE 1970.

The long-term impact of the invasion of Czechoslovakia on East-West relations was minimal. After assuming office in January 1969, the new Republican President, Richard Nixon, and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, sought the agreement on superpower arms control which had eluded Johnson. After de Gaulle resigned as President of France in April 1969, his successor Georges Pompidou sought improved relations with the USSR, although without indulging in his anti-American rhetoric. Six months later, Willy Brandt became Chancellor of the FRG, and his conduct of *Ostpolitik* contributed to the non-aggression agreement between Bonn and Moscow (August 1970), the Polish-West German treaty ratifying the Oder-Neisse frontier (December 1970), the quadripartite agreement on Berlin (3 September 1971), and the reciprocal recognition of the FRG and GDR (22 December 1972). As Garthoff observes, there was a distinction between superpower *détente*, which focused on arms control and conflicts of interest in the Third World, and European *détente*, which involved a greater emphasis on trade and 'trans-national' contacts. While superpower *détente* faltered in the late 1970s, European *détente* endured until the end of the Cold War.[1]

[1] Dunbabin, *Cold War*, pp.279-281. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp.123-127. M. E. Sarotte's *Dealing with the Devil. East Germany, Détente & Ostpolitik* (University of North Carolina Press 2001) covers Brandt's conduct of *Ostpolitik* from the GDR's perspective.

In late October 1968 Stewart, now in charge of an amalgamated Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), asserted that after Czechoslovakia British policy towards the Soviet bloc could not operate on a 'business as usual basis'. Britain would not break off diplomatic or commercial relations with the 'aggressor countries', but the Foreign Secretary stipulated that British diplomats abroad should 'avoid public expressions of goodwill' towards Soviet, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian officials, but 'should as far as possible keep in step with the representatives of other NATO countries' in their dealings with representatives of the 'aggressor states'.[2] Stewart's instructions illustrated the contradiction inherent in British policy towards East-West relations following the Czechoslovak crisis. Ministers were under pressure from Parliament and the public to condemn the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but were also anxious to avoid 'petty pinpricks' which would irritate the Soviets and worsen already fragile bilateral relations. This dilemma was highlighted by a ludicrous quarrel between Wilson and Stewart in Cabinet on 17 December arising from the Prime Minister's intention to send Christmas cards to the leaders of the 'aggressor countries'. This row over Wilson's willingness to send season's greetings to the avowedly atheist rulers of the USSR and their henchmen in Warsaw, Budapest and Sofia raises the question of whether, despite the Foreign Secretary's comments, British policy towards the Eastern bloc after the Prague Spring was indeed that of 'business as usual'.[3] This chapter assesses whether there was any substantial change in the British government's

[2] FCO to Missions, 29.10.68, *DBPO III, I*, pp.85-86. On 14 October 1968 the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices were amalgamated into one department, the FCO; one consequence of this amalgamation was that the Northern Department was renamed the East European and Soviet Department (EESD).
[3] CC52(68)52nd conclusions, 17.12.68, **CAB128/43**(PRO). Crossman, III, 17.12.68, p.289. Ulbricht would not have received a card from Wilson because the UK had no diplomatic relations with the GDR, but this presumably would not have concerned the former much.

perception of Soviet policy, and in the conduct of relations with the Soviets and other bloc powers, from late 1968 to the Labour government's election defeat in June 1970.

The impact of the Prague Spring on Anglo-Soviet relations.

As far as trading relations with the 'aggressor states' were concerned, the Ministerial Commercial Policy Committee conceded in early September that the proposed unilateral liberalisation of Eastern bloc imports would be delayed, but British policy would continue to operate on the principle that political disputes should not affect non-strategic trade. Ministers believed that British firms should continue to seek business in Eastern Europe because Britain could not afford to be 'less forthcoming to the aggressor countries in commercial relations than our competitors are'. Wilson, Benn and Crosland wanted to postpone the COCOM review until early 1969, when the impact of the Czechoslovak crisis on Western public opinion would have diminished, but this proposal was dropped in the face of American opposition.[4] Both Ministers and officials agreed that the invasion of Czechoslovakia had not affected the strategic balance between East and West, and that there was no need for a reassessment of British policy towards the strategic embargo. Furthermore, 'Britain's need for trade has certainly not lessened', and on

[4] PC(68)27, **FCO28/61**(PRO). Benn, *Office Without Power*, 5.9.68, p.99. ESC(O)(68)8th meeting, 20.9.68, **CAB134/2800**(PRO).

'these grounds alone there would be no reason to alter British policy and objectives [towards COCOM] in the long-term'.[5]

Yet after the suppression of the Prague Spring the tentative compromise agreed with the Americans the previous year was superseded by the USA's unwillingness to relax the strategic embargo. When COCOM members met in Paris on 14-16 October 1968, the British discovered that with the possible exception of France, no other state would support reduced embargo lists. In addition, Washington insisted on blocking ICL's proposals to export computers to the USSR. Benn argued that the ICL sale should go ahead, as otherwise its French competitors could step in and reap the profits, but the ESC concurred with official recommendations not to challenge the Americans. The British were, nonetheless, still interested in ICL's exports to Romania, which were less controversial as far as Anglo-American relations were concerned.[6] From 1968 onwards, the Romanians received preferential treatment from Britain and other Western countries, notably in trading relations, as a consequence of Ceausescu's apparent 'independence' from the Soviet bloc. At the ambassador's conference in May 1968, John Chadwick praised the Romanian leader for his 'tremendous political ingenuity and toughness', 'personal modesty' and 'humanistic ideals'. The British ambassador to Bucharest could not have predicted that during the 1970s Romania's leader would develop a despotic regime, egregious even by contemporary East European

[5] ESC(68)10, *Invasion of Czechoslovakia: Effect on Strategic Exports Policy*, 4.9.68; & ESC(68)4th meeting, 8.9.68, **CAB134/2796**(PRO).
[6] ESC(68)13, *COCOM Review*, 18.10.68; & ESC(68)5th meeting, 21.10.68, **CAB134/2796**(PRO). ESC(O)(68)12th meeting, 19.12.68, **CAB134/2800**(PRO).

standards. Yet it should be noted that the British and other Western governments courted the Romanian regime in spite of its dire domestic record, even though the Foreign Office concept of 'evolution' linked internal liberalisation in the Eastern bloc with the easing of East-West tensions.[7]

The Prime Minister, the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister of Technology were particularly committed to relaxing the scope of the strategic embargo, but when British policy towards COCOM was debated within the OPD in mid-December there was considerable pressure from the FCO, MoD and COS for a compromise agreement with Washington. Stewart informed colleagues that by insisting on relaxing the embargo on high-technology exports to the Eastern bloc, the UK was in danger of jeopardising its alliance with the USA. As noted above, Washington's hackles had already been raised by the Benn-Kirillin technological agreement, and the Foreign Secretary expressed the concerns of the service chiefs and FCO and MoD officials that the Americans would no longer consider Britain to be 'a reliable ally'. Stewart warned his colleagues that there was 'some evidence' suggesting that the USA was imposing restrictions on bilateral military co-operation as a result of the COCOM dispute. Given Britain's dependence on collaboration with the Americans in the intelligence and defence fields (particularly concerning the upgrading of *Polaris*), the Foreign Secretary felt that the UK's ability to bargain over COCOM was weak. Although a minority within the OPD maintained that American motives were purely commercial, the majority of

[7] *Ambassadors Conference*, 1st meeting, 7.5.68, **FCO28/45**(PRO). M. Percival, 'Britain's 'Political Romance' with Romania in the 1970s', in *Contemporary European History*, 4/1 (1995), pp.67-87.

Ministers agreed with Stewart that Britain had to modify its policy towards the strategic embargo.[8]

The British would have been less concerned had they realised that American policy-makers were at odds over how to resolve the dispute over COCOM, which divided the USA from both the UK and France. While the Department of Defense proposed punitive measures to restrict West European access to US-made computer components, State Department officials were unwilling to exacerbate inter-allied quarrels by attempting to force London and Paris into compliance with Washington. The change in administrations also had its own impact on US trade policy towards the Eastern bloc. Nixon and Kissinger favoured increased trade with the bloc states in principle, albeit as part of the policy of 'linkage' in which Soviet compromises on arms control or Vietnam would be 'rewarded' by American concessions in commercial and other fields. The US business community, supported by the State and Commerce Departments, favoured a relaxation of trade restrictions with the Soviet bloc, and due to the Paris Peace talks, Vietnam was by early 1969 less of an obstacle to trading relations than it had been in previous years.[9] The American and British governments therefore reached a compromise in January 1969 which formed the basis for the completion of the COCOM review. Washington agreed to permit the export by Western businesses of all but the most powerful computers to Soviet bloc states. London in

[8] COS60th/68, 17.12.68, **DEFE4/234**(PRO). OPD(68)76, *COCOM. The 1968 List Review*, 18.12.68, **CAB148/38**(PRO). OPD(68)24th meeting, 18.12.68, **CAB148/35**(PRO).
[9] 'Memorandum on the Export of Computer Technology to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union by our Allies' by State Dept, 21.12.68, *FRUS IX*, pp.548-550. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp.103-104.

turn agreed that the UK would not export any computers to China, or provide the more sophisticated machines to the WTO states, without the unanimous consent of the USA and other COCOM members.[10] Crosland informed the OPD that the results of the 1968-1969 review presented 'increased opportunities for British exports in the field of computers, radar and other electronics' to the Eastern bloc, although in return the UK had to accept more restrictions on trade with China and some 'limited strengthening' of the embargo on the Soviet bloc states. Wilson and his Ministers accepted the outcome of the review which, considering British policy towards COCOM, represented a compromise on both London and Washington's part.[11]

In the aftermath of the invasion, senior NATO commanders expressed alarm that they had received no 'military warning' of the WTO intervention in Czechoslovakia. The occupation of Czechoslovakia took place concurrently with both the movement of 10 divisions from the Western USSR to the GDR and Poland, and the positioning of Soviet forces on the Bohemian-Bavarian frontier. In Miller's words, 'the Soviet Union had not only restored its control over Czechoslovakia, but had also greatly strengthened its front-line against NATO'. Miller argues that the Warsaw Pact's ability to execute an operation as complex as *Danube* demonstrated the vulnerability of Western Europe to a 'standing start' offensive (a 'standing start' being defined as a surprise attack mounted without

[10] ESC(O)(69)1st meeting, 20.1.69; & ESC(O)(69)13, *Outcome of 1968/69 COCOM Review*, 5.6.69, **CAB134/2801**(PRO).
[11] OPD(69)13th meeting, 28.7.69, **CAB148/91**(PRO).

mobilising reserves, using military exercises to conceal preparations).[12] One analysis drafted by British military planners in late September noted that before the invasion NATO powers felt 'that events were moving towards a settlement' between Czechoslovakia and the WTO 'Five', and that the latter had achieved 'tactical surprise' as a consequence of 'the prevailing atmosphere of *détente* in Europe'. Although mobilisation and large troop movements within Eastern Europe would give NATO 'political warning' of possible military action, the unexpected intervention against Czechoslovakia showed that 'NATO cannot guarantee to predict the enemy's intentions reliably'.[13]

Despite this assessment, senior military and civilian officials in London were far more sanguine about *Danube*'s strategic implications than their opposite numbers in NATO. The JIC sought to play down its failure to anticipate the WTO intervention, arguing that 'while Czechoslovakia was threatened with aggression, NATO was not'. Although there is no indication as such in declassified documents, it is possible that this judgement was partly based on SIGINT intercepts. The Americans successfully intercepted Soviet military communications during the invasion, and it is conceivable that this SIGINT information was passed on to the British.[14] The COS noted on 1 October that there were 35 Soviet divisions stationed in the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia, compared to 22 before the invasion, but that on the other hand as a consequence of the Prague Spring the Czechoslovak armed forces could no longer be regarded by Moscow as

[12] UKDelNATO to FO, No.509, 23.8.68, **FCO28/100**(PRO). Miller, *Cold War*, p.39, pp.60-61, pp.322-323.
[13] DP219/68, *British Defence Policy - The Impact of Recent Events in Czechoslovakia*, 23.9.68, **DEFE6/106**(PRO).
[14] OPD(68)58, **CAB148/38**(PRO). Bamford, *Body of Secrets*, p.153.

reliable. The chiefs concluded that there had been 'no significant increase in Soviet [bloc] capability as a result of the Czechoslovak crisis', that NATO's military officials exaggerated the threat to Western Europe, and that the Americans in particular were trying to 'coerce' Alliance members into raising their force levels.[15] Healey informed his OPD colleagues on 25 September that 'it was significant that the Russians had used force to maintain the *status quo*, not to challenge it'. According to Bruce, the Defence Secretary felt that both the strategic balance in Europe and the assumptions underpinning the NATO strategic review (MC14/3) remained unchanged.[16] On 31 October, the OPD approved Healey and Stewart's recommendations to increase the UK's naval presence in the Mediterranean, and to earmark army units for contingencies involving a threat to the Alliance's Northern and Southern flanks, but the British decided not to accelerate the withdrawal from East of Suez to reinforce NATO. In addition, London refused to send the infantry brigade redeployed to the UK after the offsets agreement back to BAOR.[17]

The consensus within Whitehall that Soviet intentions were limited to the suppression of the Prague Spring proved correct, although it can be argued that the potential military implications of a WTO surprise attack in Central Europe were dismissed too readily. A common error in policy-making is to arrive at a preconceived conclusion, and to overlook intelligence information which contradicts

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[15] COS50th/68, 1.10.68, **DEFE4/234**(PRO). COS62/68, *Briefs for the 41st meeting of the MC/CS*, 10.9.68, **DEFE5/178**(PRO).
[16] OPD(68)17th meeting, 25.9.68. London to State Dept, No.12398, 5.9.68, **NSF**, UKCF211, LBJLIB.
[17] OPD(68)63, *NATO and Czechoslovakia*, 28.10.68, **CAB148/38**(PRO). OPD(68)19th meeting, 31.10.68, **CAB148/35**(PRO). FCO to Canberra, No.1677, 8.11.68, **FCO46/249**(PRO).

this hypothesis. The prevailing view in London was that, as Wilson was informed by one of Trend's subordinates, 'the main hazard for us as a country (and therefore as a useful member of NATO) remains our economic position', and that Britain could not afford to increase its defence expenditure. During the summer of 1968 the COS felt that it was 'most important that no attempt should be made to inflate the Soviet threat lest it should be misconstrued in Whitehall to as an attempt to justify greater forces'. Although the chiefs were specifically referring to emerging Soviet maritime capabilities, a similar attitude possibly underpinned assessments of the implications of the Czechoslovak crisis.[18]

Anglo-Soviet political relations were already strained before the invasion of Czechoslovakia, partly because of the extent of Soviet espionage in the UK. On 12 July the counsellor of the British embassy in Washington, Edwin Bolland, met with Malcolm Toon, the State Department's principal Soviet expert, to discuss this problem. Bolland stated that the Foreign Office was 'considerably disturbed at the substantial increase in Soviet personnel assigned to the United Kingdom over the past four years', and was itself under pressure from the Home Office and MI5 to act. Before presenting recommendations to the Cabinet the Permanent Under-Secretary had instructed the Washington embassy and the High Commission in Ottawa to examine how the Americans and Canadians dealt with the same problem. Bolland asked Toon whether the USA had imposed a limit on Soviet embassy staff, whether known and suspected KGB and GRU officers were denied

[18] J. Hughes-Wilson, *Military Intelligence Blunders*, (London; Robinson Publishing 1999), p.13. H. Lawrence-Wilson (Cabinet Office) to PM, 24.9.68, **PREM13/1996**(PRO). COS29th/68, 21.5.68, **DEFE4/228**(PRO).

diplomatic visas, and under what circumstances a Soviet diplomat would be declared *persona non grata*. Toon told Bolland that there were four categories of Soviet personnel in the USA; embassy staff, members of the UN Secretariat in New York, journalists (genuine or otherwise) and staff on the state agency for Soviet-American trade, AMTORG. The American government could easily expel Soviets in the last three categories, although in the second case the UN Secretary-General had to be informed. If the number of Soviet embassy personnel rose, the USA could respond by increasing its representation in Moscow, and Soviet diplomats caught spying would be declared *persona non grata*.[19] The intensification of the Czechoslovak crisis during the summer of 1968 drew Foreign Office attention away from this issue, but on 27 September Stewart wrote to Wilson, arguing that the time had come to challenge the Soviets over recent spy scandals involving their diplomats in London.

The Foreign Secretary asserted that the British government had 'tolerated ... for far too long' the fact that many Soviet diplomats were 'instead of contributing to the development of relations between us and the Soviet Union' actually posed 'a threat to these relations'. Apart from the security implications of KGB and GRU activities in the UK, the overstaffing of Soviet missions had reached absurd levels. The Soviet embassy had 64 diplomats in 1964, a figure which had risen to 80 four years later. Sixty two were suspected intelligence officers, in addition to 32 of the 95 support staff, and a further 28 out of the 180 officials in the Soviet trade mission. Compared to this, the British embassy in

[19] Conversation between E. Bolland & M. Toon at State Dept, 12.7.68; **RG59**, 160, 64-65, 2665, NARAII.

Moscow had only 40 diplomats (although Stewart did not say how many were actually SIS officers). Unlike the USA, Britain could not insist on parity of representation, because of the small size of its diplomatic corps, so the Foreign Secretary instead recommended that the Soviets should be told to limit embassy staff numbers to present levels. In mid-October, James Callaghan (who was now Home Secretary) gave his support to Stewart, although MI5 complained that the proposed measure did not cover the Soviet trade delegation or consular offices outside London. Wilson subsequently gave his approval to Stewart's proposal.[20] On 11 November, Gore-Booth told Smirnovsky that the British government wanted Soviet embassy staff levels to be set at 80 diplomats, 60 non-diplomatic staff and 8 service personnel. The latter's response was that this 'unfriendly gesture' reflected the 'general hostility' Britain showed towards the USSR. Having had restrictions imposed on the size of the London embassy, the Soviets simply increased the number of staff at their trade delegation.[21]

Geoffrey Harrison's successor, Duncan Wilson, began his service in Moscow in October 1968. His last posting was as ambassador to Belgrade, and as noted previously he was one of the FCO's more optimistic exponents of the 'evolution' of Eastern Europe. On the 9 December, Duncan Wilson provided a lengthy analysis of Soviet foreign policy, with particular reference to Brezhnev's speech at Warsaw the previous month. The CPSU General Secretary reiterated the argument that the

[20] Stewart to PM, 27.9.68; memorandum to A. Halls (No.10), 16.10.68; Palliser to Day, 21.10.68, **PREM13/2009**(PRO).
[21] Stewart to D. Wilson (Moscow), 11.11.68; & R. Maudling & A. Douglas-Home to E. Heath, 30.7.71, *DBPO III, I*, pp.91-93, pp.359-362.

ideological struggle between Communism and capitalism had intensified, and that the 'counter-revolution' in Czechoslovakia was due to imperialist subversion, disguised as 'bridge-building'. Brezhnev justified the invasion of Czechoslovakia on the grounds that the Prague Spring threatened the survival of the 'Socialist Commonwealth'. Duncan Wilson maintained that the 'Brezhnev Doctrine' was not a 'charter for expansion', and he distinguished between Moscow's readiness to use force against rebellious states within the Eastern bloc, and the USSR's 'cautious and pragmatic' policies elsewhere:

> I would conclude that the Soviet Government is not anxious to take any further military-political action inside the area covered by the Warsaw Pact, but would do so if they thought necessary, undeterred by fear of reprisals from the West; and that outside the Warsaw Pact area they will be constrained by economic pressures and fear of nuclear war to display considerable caution.

The ambassador to Moscow stated that a return to 'a general Cold War' over Czechoslovakia would be contrary to Western interests, which were best served by the promotion of *détente*, and he also argued that Britain was in danger of being seen to be waging a 'private Anglo-Soviet cold war', and to be lagging behind other Western powers (including the USA) in the pursuit of East-West *détente*.[22]

Duncan Wilson's comments reflected the Moscow embassy's impressions of Soviet foreign policy priorities at the end of 1968, the first being considered to be 'the defence of the Soviet Union ... as the heartland of Socialism', the second being the preservation of the USSR's 'sphere of influence' in Eastern Europe, and

[22] D. Wilson to Stewart, 4.11.68 & 9.12.68, *DBPO III, I*, pp.87-89 & pp.100-110. Brezhnev's speech to the Polish Communist Party Congress in Warsaw is summarised by Roberts, *Soviet Union*, p.72.

after these objectives the expansion of Soviet world power 'concurrently with the expansion of Marxism/Leninism as a doctrine'. Stewart responded to Duncan Wilson's assessment in early January 1969, expressing his concerns that Moscow's 'Socialist Commonwealth' rhetoric could be employed to justify Soviet intervention outside Eastern Europe. Stewart expressed particular concern for the possible implications of the 'Brezhnev doctrine' for the Soviet maritime build-up in the Mediterranean. The Foreign Secretary expressed his scorn for the 'Russian humbug about a private British vendetta', seeing this as a prime example of the USSR's habit of 'wedge-driving', and expressed his dissatisfaction with the 'note of contempt in the manner in which the Russians deal with and speak of this country'.[23] Stewart clearly considered Soviet propaganda attacks on British 'hostility' to be empty talk, while Duncan Wilson was far more concerned at the deterioration in Anglo-Soviet relations. Palliser observed that Moscow's anti-British diatribes were 'understandable' because there was 'no important place' for Britain in Soviet foreign policy. Like other FCO officials, Palliser had concluded that the preceding four years of Wilson's dealings with the Soviet leadership had done little for bilateral relations.[24]

[23] G. Clark (Moscow) to C. Giffard (EESD), 4.12.68, **FCO49/241**(PRO). Stewart to D. Wilson, 7.1.69, *DBPO III, I*, pp.111-115.
[24] D. Wilson to Stewart, 28.1.69; & Palliser to Trend, 28.1.69, **PREM13/2959**(PRO).

British assessments of Soviet foreign policy: February 1969-June 1970.

In Stewart's opinion, the Czechoslovak crisis 'illuminated the uneasy balance between defence and offence in Soviet foreign policy'. In February 1969 he presented to the OPD an assessment by the FCO on the future course of East-West relations, which in his sombre words concluded that the prospects for rapprochement between the Western powers and Soviet bloc were 'less hopeful than we thought two years ago'. Although Moscow's intentions towards Western Europe had not changed since August 1968, the USSR was still intent on weakening and subverting the Western powers, and on expanding its influence across the world. The FCO paper ominously noted that 'Soviet interest in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Indian Ocean will be intensified, possibly to the point of risking local defeats' like that suffered by the Arabs in June 1967 'to which the Soviet Government might react dangerously'. In Eastern Europe, the ideological inflexibility of the ruling regimes conflicted with popular demands for increased contacts with the West and for 'greater political and economic freedom from Soviet hegemony'. The Soviet leadership could control unrest within the USSR because of the 'dead weight of Russian bureaucracy' and the conservative 'sense of patriotism' among the Soviet populace, but Eastern Europe would continue to be a source of instability due to Moscow's intolerance of reform.

The Foreign Secretary informed his colleagues that the prospects of an East-West war caused by 'accident or miscalculation' were slim, 'except in the

unlikely event of uncontainable explosions in Eastern Europe'. Yet with the exception of the contacts established between the superpowers on arms control, Stewart believed that there was little scope for negotiated agreements with the Soviets on other outstanding problems, including Germany and European security. The Foreign Secretary concluded that while the UK and other Western powers should continue their efforts to promote *détente*, the invasion of Czechoslovakia 'made it clearer than ever that the achievement of this goal depends on changes in the basic attitudes of the Soviet leadership'. Stewart concluded that such a development was unlikely in the near future, and that '[we] are in for a long haul'. The OPD approved this analysis without comment.[25]

Throughout this paper, and the FCO's thinking on East-West relations, there was a contradiction which remained unresolved. Discontent with socio-economic austerity and pressure for political change would continue to fester in the Eastern bloc, but the Soviet and East European regimes would not introduce any reforms which would alleviate this pressure. The logical result would be the 'uncontrollable explosions' of revolutionary upheaval which Stewart considered unlikely and which, as noted above, FCO officials hoped would not occur. The British continued to hope for the eventual 'evolution' of the Eastern European countries away from Marxist-Leninist dogma and towards a more liberal political and economic order, but there were few signs of such a development taking place in early 1969. The FCO's analysis of 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia, and its erroneous conclusions

[25] OPD(69)8, *The Longer Term Prospects for East-West Relations after the Czechoslovak crisis*, 18.2.69, & cover note by Stewart, **PREM13.2114**(PRO). OPD(69)4th meeting, 18.3.69, **CAB148/91**(PRO).

on the prospects for continued reform, displayed a tendency towards wishful thinking. The British government's conclusion that there was little that the UK and other Western powers could do to help promote 'evolution' was probably realistic, given Moscow's hyper-sensitivity towards 'bridge-building', but Ministers and officials alike were unable to explain how leaders like Brezhnev, Ulbricht, Gomulka, Husak and Zhivkov would ever allow 'evolution' to take place.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia and the 'Brezhnev doctrine' led the American and British governments to examine the possibility of Soviet intervention against Romania or Yugoslavia, yet neither government expected that the suppression of the Prague Spring would intensify the Sino-Soviet feud. Recent research suggests that Beijing initiated the two clashes between Chinese and Soviet border troops on the Ussuri river (2 and 15 March 1969) in order to deter the USSR from using the same methods employed against Dubcek to overthrow Mao's regime. However, these clashes led to a series of bloody battles along the Sino-Soviet frontier which threatened to escalate into all-out war.[26] On 9 April, Duncan Wilson informed Stewart that the Soviets were likely to reinforce their military presence in the Far East. The threat of confrontation with China would, he argued, make Moscow more inclined to negotiate with Washington on arms control, and to be more 'respectable' in its relations with the West Europeans. However, the USSR was unlikely to ease its strategic burden by agreeing to mutual force reductions in Europe, as Czechoslovakia had demonstrated that

[26] See Yang Kuisong, 'The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American *Rapprochement*', in *Cold War History*, 1/1 (2000), pp.21-49; & W. Burr, 'Sino-American Relations 1969: The Sino-Soviet Border War and Steps Towards *Rapprochement*', *Cold War History*, 1/3 (2001), pp.73-105.

without a strong Soviet military presence the Communist system in Eastern Europe would collapse. Duncan Wilson noted that although the Soviet leaders 'probably take more seriously than we do the possibility of a *rapprochement* between the US and China', any 'radical' attempts to improve relations with the USA would divide the *Politburo*, arouse increased hostility from China and encourage 'liberal and revisionist tendencies' within the Eastern bloc. The ambassador therefore considered a US-Soviet *entente* aimed against China to be unlikely.[27]

Duncan Wilson's supposition that Soviet concerns over a Sino-American alignment were unrealistic were invalidated by Nixon's visit to China in 1972, but represented British opinion in mid-1969. During the Prime Minister's meeting with Nixon at the US air base at Mildenhall (3 August 1969), the former described the USSR as a 'conservative' country, which would 'naturally respond to any opportunity for disruptive penetration' in Asia, but was more inclined 'to see stability in the area rather than arouse the more revolutionary Communist country, China, to scoop the pool'. Nixon expressed his agreement with this view, and also reiterated American concerns over the Chinese nuclear programme.[28] The FCO's analysis of the implications of the Sino-Soviet border conflict focused on the non-existent prospects of reconciliation between Moscow and Beijing. The PUSD's examination of the feud, produced in December 1969, commented on the benefits of the Sino-Soviet split for Western interests, in particular the USSR's greater

[27] D. Wilson to Stewart, 9.4.69, *DPBO III, I*, pp.127-129.
[28] E. Youde (No.10), Conversation between Nixon & PM at USAF Mildenhall, 3.8.69, **PREM13/3009/1**(PRO).

willingness to discuss arms control with the USA. British policy had consistently maintained that China could not be isolated in perpetuity, and envisaged that in the long-term Beijing would moderate its hostility towards the West. However, the PUSD concluded that 'the card of flirtation with China is one to be used with great caution', otherwise Western efforts to improve relations with the USSR would suffer. In response, Duncan Wilson suggested that the PUSD overlooked the possibility of a diplomatic *coup* similar to the 1939 'Molotov-Ribbentrop' Pact, but in this respect he was referring to possibility of Sino-Soviet reconciliation.[29] The FCO's failure to foresee the improvement of Sino-Western relations was not a product of official short-sightedness. Both Yang Kuisong and William Burr show that Nixon and Mao had to overcome a legacy of mutual suspicion, intense ideological animosity and clashes of interest over Indochina and Taiwan. The consensus in Whitehall was that there would be a 'triangular' relationship between the USA, USSR and PRC. In Washington, both Kissinger and the State Department regarded the future trilateral relationship in similar terms.[30]

Wilson's discussions with Nixon at Mildenhall (August 1969) represented an effort on the former's part to establish good relations with the new President. Like his relationship with Johnson, Wilson's attempts to befriend Nixon had mixed results. Kissinger recalled that when the Prime Minister suggested to the President that they could talk on first-name terms, a 'fish-eyed stare from Nixon squelched

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[29] OPD(O)(LT)(69)2, *The Sino-Soviet Dispute*, 4.12.69; & D. Wilson to P. Cradock (PUSD), 3.12.69, **FCO49/255**(PRO).
[30] Kuisong, 'Sino-Soviet Clash', pp.41-49. Burr, 'Sino-American Relations', pp.103-105. JIC(A), *Soviet Foreign Policy*, 15.12.69, *DBPO III, I*, pp.200-205.

this idea'.[31] Kissinger commented that the new President 'distrusted' Wilson, yet the former was far more diplomatic in his dealings with the Prime Minister than Johnson had been. The Mildenhall meeting took place during a brief stop-over following Nixon's Asian tour, and was a symbolic gesture towards the 'special relationship'. Yet during his talks with Wilson the President paid extravagant tribute to Britain's 'great expertise in foreign affairs', and stated that the British could contribute to American policy through their 'analysis and prognosis' of world affairs. Wilson acknowledged that the President had a reputation for insincerity (or 'Nixon charm', as he put it), but chose to believe that the latter's comments on British diplomatic expertise were genuine.[32] Nixon's statements on Britain's diplomatic role were not only what Wilson wanted to hear, but were linked to the Prime Minister's intention to visit Moscow a fourth time.

In May 1969 Benn visited the USSR for discussions with Kirillin, and Wilson asked the Minister of Technology to pass a message to Kosygin. Despite a warning from Stewart to steer clear of politics during his trip, Benn told Kosygin that Wilson regretted the fact that Anglo-Soviet contacts had been frozen as a result of the Czechoslovak crisis. The Prime Minister also felt that 'it might be useful to have a personal visit' to meet the Soviet Premier, in order to discuss 'matters of common interest'.[33] This was a reference to the Middle East, which was the subject of a Soviet 'peace' initiative. Following the Six Day War, Egypt

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[31] Healey, *Time of My Life*, p.318. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p.92, pp.417-418.
[32] Kissinger, *White House Years*, p.933. Nixon & PM, 3.8.69, **PREM13/3009/1**(PRO).
[33] Benn, *Office Without Power*, 12.5.69, 13.5.69 & 14.5.69, ppp.161-173. Moscow to FCO, No.464, 14.5.69, **PREM13/3429**(PRO).

and Israel waged a war of attrition along the Suez Canal and efforts at mediation by the UN Special Representative, Gunnar Jarring, had proved fruitless. The USSR's 1969 initiative repeated the terms of a plan produced the previous year, which advocated an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, followed by the recognition of Israel by the Arab powers. The initiative was a dead letter because both belligerents were unwilling to compromise on the issues of land and recognition, but Wilson considered it a subject worth discussing with Kosygin. By using Benn as his intermediary with the Soviets, Wilson had not consulted the Foreign Secretary, as he was presumably aware that Stewart would oppose a trip to Moscow. The Prime Minister also regarded the suppression of the 'Prague Spring' as a mere impediment to his efforts to establish his ties with the Soviet leadership.[34]

Kosygin suggested that the Prime Minister visit Moscow in June or July. On previous occasions, the Soviets had delayed their invitations to Wilson, and the alacrity with which Kosygin accepted the former's proposed visit reflected Soviet concerns to salvage the USSR's diplomatic respectability after the Prague Spring. The FCO was, however, unenthusiastic and persuaded the Prime Minister to delay any visit to the USSR until after his trip to Washington. In late May Stewart reminded Wilson that the NATO powers had agreed that 'in their bilateral contacts with the Soviet Union and the four invading Warsaw Pact members the Allies will continue to exercise restraint on political exchanges'. The criteria for

[34] Calvocoressi, *World Politics*, pp.396-397. Golan, *Soviet Policies*, pp.71-72. The Soviet 'peace plan' is in OPD(69)35, *The Arab/Israeli Dispute*, 21.7.69, Annex C, **CAB148/92**(PRO).

any visit would not be the level of representation, but the prospects for constructive agreement, and the Foreign Secretary did not consider that Wilson's intended trip to the USSR would have any practical purpose.[35]

The Prime Minister was not prepared to give this idea up lightly, and he stated that during the Mildenhall meeting Nixon had shown interest in his proposal to meet Kosygin, seeing this as an opportunity to sound out the Soviets on strategic arms talks, Vietnam and the Middle East. Nixon was perhaps displaying a tendency he showed on subsequent occasions, as unlike Johnson he showed more willingness to listen politely to the opinions of foreign leaders.[36] Stewart was unmoved by Wilson's account of the Mildenhall talks, arguing that while the British government had several issues it wished to discuss with the Nixon administration, there was 'relatively little' to raise with the Soviets. The Foreign Secretary asserted that unless the President specifically requested otherwise, Wilson should still visit the USA first. In conversation with the British ambassador to Washington on 16 September, Kissinger gave no special reason for the Prime Minister meeting Kosygin before his planned American trip (scheduled for January 1970). Nixon's National Security Advisor diplomatically commented that 'the President would have found it valuable ... to hear the Prime Minister's judgement, for which he had the highest respect, on Soviet attitudes', but this did not lead Stewart or FCO officials to change their minds.[37]

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[35] Memorandum for Youde, 21.5.69; Youde to N. Barrington, 27.5.69, **PREM13/3429**(PRO).
[36] Nixon & PM, 3.8.69, **PREM13/3009/1**(PRO). FCO to Washington, No.1715, 5.8.69, **PREM13/3429**(PRO).
[37] Stewart to PM, 10.9.69; Washington to FCO, No.2510, 16.9.69, **PREM13/3429**(PRO).

From late 1968 onwards there was a clear difference of opinion between the Moscow embassy and the FCO on the conduct of relations with the USSR. Duncan Wilson was concerned that in comparison with other Western powers Britain appeared to be 'rigid and disinterested' in improving East-West relations. In contrast, FCO officials believed that it was up to the USSR to show compromise in its relations with the UK and other Western powers, and some felt that the ambassador to Moscow was 'too ready to put the best construction on Soviet behaviour'.[38] Duncan Wilson believed that the Warsaw Pact states were winning the propaganda war by calling for a European security conference at their meetings in Budapest and Prague (March and October 1969). However, Soviet bloc proposals for a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) were regarded by the FCO with misgivings similar to those officials had felt when Churchill had called for a summit in 1953. FCO officials had yet to conclude that the CSCE could be used to force concessions from the Eastern bloc states on trans-national contacts and human rights.[39]

Duncan Wilson's differences with mainstream opinion in the FCO were illustrated by his meeting with Stewart, Greenhill (who had succeeded Gore-Booth as Permanent Under-Secretary) and Brimelow (now the Deputy Under-Secretary) on 16 January 1970. The Foreign Secretary commented on the latter's argument that 'we should be more active in dialogue with the Russians', and rhetorically

[38] Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p.131. M. Hopkins, "Worlds Apart': The British Embassy in Moscow and the Search for East-West Understanding', in *Contemporary British History*, 14/3 (2000), pp.143-144.
[39] Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War*, p.103. Braithwaite, p.6, **DOHP**. For the development of the FCO's approach towards the CSCE, see K. Hamilton, *The Last Cold Warriors: Britain, Détente and the CSCE, 1972-1975*, (St Anthony's College, University of Oxford European Interdependence Research Unit, Discussion Paper EIRU/991, July 1999).

enquired as to what the Soviet and British governments could 'profitably talk about ?'. Like Brimelow and Greenhill, Stewart believed that discussions with the Soviets were pointless, and that the proposed CSCE would be exploited by the Warsaw Pact powers to split the Americans and West Europeans.[40] Brimelow and Greenhill's reluctance to see Wilson pay yet another visit to the USSR reflected the opinion - which Stewart shared - that Britain had shown too much eagerness to develop Anglo-Soviet goodwill, and that the UK's efforts to promote *détente* had been spurned by Moscow. Although Wilson did receive another invitation to the USSR on 13 June 1970, Labour's general election defeat five days later left its acceptance to a new Prime Minister, Edward Heath.[41]

Conclusions:

The WTO intervention in Czechoslovakia had no fundamental effect on the essential features of British policy towards the USSR and other Soviet bloc states. The UK remained committed to East-West *détente*, and was not prepared to sacrifice its commercial relations with the Eastern bloc or to increase defence expenditure. Contrary to Stewart's comments, Britain did operate on a 'business as usual basis' after August 1968, as did other Western countries. The military and strategic consequences of the invasion of Czechoslovakia did not create much concern in Whitehall, and it is significant that there was no 'war scare' following

[40] Meeting between Brimelow, Greenhill, Stewart & D. Wilson, 16.1.70, **PREM13/3429**(PRO).
[41] Memorandum by P. Moon (FCO), 13.6.70, **PREM13/3495**(PRO).

the suppression of the Prague Spring.[42] In fact, it is fair to say the foreign and security policy issues which concerned the Wilson government the most were those related to the Nigerian civil war and the outbreak of civil strife in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1969.[43]

The Czechoslovak crisis did have an impact on political and popular perceptions of the USSR. Stewart and FCO officials were particularly anxious to impress on the Cabinet the Soviet leadership's inflexibility both in its dealings with Western governments, and in the face of demands for reform within the Eastern bloc. The Foreign Secretary also blocked Wilson's attempt to meet Kosygin in Moscow, arguing that there was little that the British and Soviet governments could 'profitably' discuss. According to Ben Pimlott, Stewart insisted that he be given security of tenure when he was reappointed Foreign Secretary in March 1968. Pimlott also argues that as Wilson's relationship with his Cabinet colleagues deteriorated in the final months of his Premiership, Stewart was one of the few Ministers he could confide in and trust. In this respect, it is significant that the Foreign Secretary was able to thwart the Prime Minister's efforts to undertake a fourth visit to the USSR. Wilson clearly wanted to maintain contact with the Soviet leadership, and sought to overcome Stewart's opposition to a visit by using Benn as a contact with Kosygin. However, Stewart and the FCO considered that a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Soviet Premier

[42] D. Wilson, 'Anglo-Soviet Relations', pp.390-391.
[43] Morgan, *People's Peace*, pp.290-292. Pimlott, *Wilson*, pp.491-492, pp.548-550.

would have little value, and whatever his personal feelings Wilson did not overrule, or confront, the Foreign Secretary.[44]

While Benn regarded Stewart's thinking on policy towards the Soviet bloc as 'barely post-Dulles' in its outlook, the latter did have a point. As Duncan Wilson noted, Khrushchev had dealt mercilessly with the Hungarian rebels in 1956, but had also accepted the rise of Polish 'national Communism'. However, Brezhnev and his colleagues had displayed a complete intolerance for any reform whatsoever in Eastern Europe, even if undertaken by the Communist regimes. The cynicism the Soviet leaders had shown in August 1968 discredited the USSR's reputation in Britain and elsewhere, and disillusioned many who would have shared Crossman's feelings, as confided in his diary over a fortnight after the invasion of Czechoslovakia:

> [Somehow] I had persuaded myself over the past three or four years that a change was setting in and that with the policy of peaceful coexistence, the Russians would grow more civilised. But now they're exactly as bad as they were.[45]

[44] Pimlott, *Wilson*, p.502, p.546.
[45] D. Wilson to Stewart, 28.1.69, **PREM13/2959**(PRO). Crossman, III, 1.9.68, p.179.

CONCLUSION.

According to one study of the Heath government's term in office (1970-1974), one aspect of British foreign policy which 'remained strangely under-developed ... [was] relations with the Soviet Union'. The new Prime Minister's principal policy objective was to take Britain into the EEC, and unlike both Macmillan and Wilson, Heath had no intention of even visiting the USSR.[1] In September 1971 the British government expelled 105 KGB and GRU officers from the Soviet embassy and trade mission. The pretext for this mass expulsion (known as Operation *Foot*) was provided by a KGB defector, Oleg Lyalin, who informed MI5 of the Soviet embassy's plans for widespread sabotage across Britain in the event of an East-West war. Operation *Foot* came as an unpleasant shock to the Soviets, who had expanded their intelligence activities in the UK throughout the 1960s. The KGB's aim, according to one defector, was to 'swamp the overstretched MI5 with more intelligence officers than they could hope to keep under effective surveillance', and *Foot* caused irreparable damage to Soviet espionage in Britain. For both the Heath government and the FCO, these expulsions were an opportunity to show the Soviets that the British government could not be pushed around.[2]

Operation *Foot* was a by-product of the re-assessment of Anglo-Soviet relations which had began within the Foreign Office in early 1968. Officials felt

[1] C. Hill & C. Lord, 'The foreign policy of the Heath Government', in S. Ball & A. Seldon (ed.), *The Heath Government 1970-74. A Reappraisal*, (Longman 1996), p.309. Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life*, (Hodder & Stoughton 1998), pp.474-476.

[2] Meeting at Greenhill's office, 25.5.71. Douglas-Home to R. Maudling, 11.9.71, *DBPO III, I*, pp.339-43, & pp.378-379. Andrew & Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archives*, pp.499-500, pp.538-539. Hopkins, "Worlds Apart", p.144.

that the USSR had treated British intentions to foster bilateral goodwill with contempt, and that Britain had to 'meet toughness with toughness' when dealing with the Soviets. Expelling over a hundred suspected intelligence officers after months of complaint at their abuse of diplomatic immunity was one means of showing 'toughness'. During the early 1970s, the USA, France and the FRG were proactive in seeking *détente* with the Soviets, but the Heath government was in no mood to 'run after the Russians', and FCO officials took pride in the UK's reputation as the 'Cassandra to the Western alliance'. Although Britain did not respond to either the Czechoslovak crisis or the growth in Soviet naval power by increasing defence expenditure, this lack of alarmism was combined with a sceptical response to Soviet declarations of goodwill.[3] During the 1970s, as White notes, West Germany claimed the leading role as Western Europe's exponent of *détente*, with Brandt developing a working relationship with Brezhnev that Wilson had failed to achieve. *Ostpolitik* was supported by London because it helped defuse the tensions inherent in the German question. Bonn's overtures to the USSR and the East European states also helped dispel the suspicions concerning future German intentions which British officials privately maintained. However, the FRG's new approach towards East-West relations had profound implications for British policy towards *détente*. Given the essential importance of the German problem as a source of Cold War tensions, it was inevitable that increased contacts and better relations between West Germany and the Soviet bloc states

[3] G. Roberts to Stewart, 13.6.68, **FCO28/54**(PRO). *DBPO III, III. Détente in Europe 1972-76*, (London; Frank Cass 2001), pp.xv-xvi.

would mean a reduced role for other West European states with an interest in promoting *détente*.[4]

Ostpolitik also posed its own problems for Western solidarity. Both Heath and the Foreign Secretary, Douglas-Home, were concerned that France, the FRG and other Western powers would engage in 'competitive *détente*', and that as the continental allies scrambled for increased trade with the Soviet bloc Western unity would be eroded. The FCO were likewise worried that negotiations for the CSCE would be exploited by the Soviets to divide Western Europe from the USA. As a consequence of American apathy, it was the British who took the lead in co-ordinating NATO's position in the preliminary negotiations from 1972 onwards. While the Soviets intended to use the CSCE to formalise the *status quo* on the continent, Britain and its allies forced the WTO powers to make concessions on trans-national contacts and human rights in the 'Final Act' signed by participants at Helsinki in 1975.[5] It is also worth noting that following Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 the Conservative government sought to improve relations with China. Western efforts to develop closer ties with the PRC were regarded with a mixture of concern and annoyance in Moscow. China posed a serious threat to Soviet security, and after the border clashes of 1969 up to one third of the USSR's armed forces were deployed in the Far East.[6]

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[4] Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War*, p.124. White, *Britain (and) détente*, p.121, p.131.
[5] White, *Britain (and) détente*, p.127. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp.531-535. Steering Brief for UK delegation to CSCE, 13.9.73, *DBPO III, II. Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe, 1972-75*, (HMSO 1997), pp.179-186.
[6] J. Steele, *World Power. Soviet Foreign Policy under Brezhnev and Andropov*, (London; Michael Joseph 1983), pp.266-268. Hill & Lord, 'Foreign policy', p.309.

Under Brezhnev, the USSR emerged as 'a real world power', and Soviet objectives towards *détente* were partly intended to re-affirm superpower status. Moscow's aims were firstly to stabilise the arms race and to achieve strategic parity with the USA, secondly to gain international acceptance of the post-1945 order in Europe, thirdly to increase its trade with the West, and finally to prevent Sino-American collusion. However, during the 1970s Soviet policy towards *détente* clashed with the USSR's efforts to expand its influence overseas, and by the end of the decade superpower *détente* had collapsed as a result of repeated clashes between American and Soviet interests in the Third World. Furthermore, Soviet efforts to reach military parity with the USA contributed to the USSR's internal woes, as increased defence expenditure crippled its economy. The Soviet leadership's inability to address this problem was a consequence of the concentration of power on an increasingly infirm Brezhnev. The *Politburo* became a gerontocracy, and between 1973 and 1975 younger challengers to Brezhnev's position, including Polyanskii, Shelest and Shelepin, were expelled from the CPSU Central Committee. Kosygin was side-lined and gradually deprived of authority. Although the FCO had placed its hopes on the emergence of a technocratic class less supportive of Communist dogma and more inclined towards reform, under Brezhnev the Soviet system became even more bureaucratic, rigid and corrupt. The decline of the USSR was symbolised by the deterioration of Brezhnev's physical and mental health, and well before his death in 1982 the Soviet leader had become, in Robert Service's words, a 'helpless geriatric case'.[7]

[7] Roberts, *Soviet Union*, p.66. Steele, *World Power*, p.ix. Craig Nation, *Red Star*, p.232. Service, *Twentieth Century Russia*, pp.391-393, pp.403-404.

Duncan Wilson observed in 1974 that '[the] Soviet Union stands as the Great Power successor to the Tsarist Empire - expansionist and repressive'. The USSR had lost any ideological magnetism it had possessed, and the suppression of the Prague Spring had tarnished its reputation. Having completed his service in Moscow in 1971, Duncan Wilson maintained three years on that commercial and cultural contacts with the Soviets were necessary in order to encourage *détente*. Another former diplomat in the Moscow embassy, Roderic Braithwaite (who served as the Commercial Secretary from 1963-1966, and returned as ambassador from 1988-1991), was more sceptical about the value of East-West contacts. In his opinion, the Wilson government's dealings with the Soviet leadership did not make 'a huge difference':

> Harold Wilson had his own connections with Eastern Europe and Russia, but the truth of the matter is that ... the substance of Anglo-Russian or Anglo-Soviet relations has always been very thin. As a bilateral relationship neither country has actually cared very much about the other. We cared about the Soviet Union as a huge potential threat. But the policy issues which that gave rise to were mainly conducted with the NATO Alliance and within our relations with the Americans. Most of our dealings with the Russians directly were over things like who was going to throw out whose spy first, things which are not actually the mainstream of normal, bilateral, international relations.

Braithwaite asserted that, as was the case with Macmillan's 'voyage of discovery', Wilson's contacts with the Soviet leadership were merely 'gesture politics'. The British input into the LTBT in 1963 was peripheral, but was far more substantial than the UK's role in the NPT in 1968.[8] Braithwaite's critique raises four questions about the Wilson government's role in Anglo-Soviet relations. What were

[8] D. Wilson, 'Anglo-Soviet Relations', pp.388-389. Braithwaite, pp.2-3, **DOHP**.

its objectives as far as East-West relations were concerned ? To what degree was the Labour government's approach to the Cold War conditioned by the policies of its predecessors ? What did his government achieve in practical terms ? Finally, were there any missed opportunities to improve relations with the USSR ?

In contrast with de Gaulle there is no evidence of any systematic analysis on Wilson's part on the nature of *détente*, or on how East-West rivalries could be overcome. To use Kissinger's words, Wilson showed 'almost no interest in abstract ideas',[9] and only two Cold War-related issues attracted the Prime Minister's consistent attention, these being East-West trade and the Vietnam war. Wilson was a practitioner of 'magpie diplomacy', temporarily seizing on specific issues to discuss with the Soviet leadership only to drop them once they had lost their appeal. His initial interest in an NPT faded after his visit to Moscow in February 1966, and as one study of British arms control policy notes, Wilson devoted a mere six pages of his memoirs to an issue which the Labour government initially declared to be a priority. Other short-term interests included NATO and Warsaw Pact force reductions and the Middle East. It is particularly important to note that although Foreign Office officials developed the hypothesis of 'evolution' within the Soviet bloc, there is no sign that the Prime Minister was in any way concerned with Britain's contacts with the East European states. Wilson paid three visits to Moscow, but unlike the French President - who visited Poland (1967) and Romania (1968) - Wilson did not visit Eastern Europe.[10] Furthermore, in his

[9] Kissinger, *White House Years*, p.92.
[10] Freeman, *Arms Control*, p.211. Korbel, *Détente in Europe*, p.61.

contacts with Kosygin in mid-1969 he showed scant concern over Czechoslovakia's fate, and considered the suppression of the Prague Spring to be a mere impediment in his efforts to develop ties with the Soviet leadership. Although Foreign Office officials conceded by early 1968 that British policy had neglected the East European states, Wilson continued this tradition of neglect.

Of the three Foreign Secretaries in Wilson's Cabinet, Patrick Gordon-Walker spent only three months in his post (from October 1964 to January 1965). George Brown served for longer (from August 1966 to March 1968) and was closely involved with efforts to mediate between the USA and North Vietnam, and an abortive attempt to start CTBT negotiations. Yet although there was little to distinguish Brown from Wilson on issues of policy, their mutual hostility led to Brown's eventual resignation from the Cabinet. Chris Wrigley correctly suggests that Michael Stewart's role as Foreign Secretary is open to reassessment. His Cabinet colleagues regarded him as a dull and uninspiring figure, although from Wilson's point of view Stewart's lack of ambition meant that he posed no political threat.[11] Much to the Labour left's chagrin, Stewart represented continuity with the 'Atlanticist' foreign policy followed by Attlee and Bevin. He also fully endorsed the reassessment of relations with the USSR undertaken by the Foreign Office in early 1968, and the following year he thwarted Wilson's efforts to undertake a fourth visit to Moscow. As far as defence policy was concerned, the principal initiative for the decisions made during the defence reviews came from the Defence Secretary. Despite an earlier flirtation with Communism, Healey did

[11] Wrigley, 'Labour's Foreign Policy', in Coopey, Fielding, & Tiratsoo, *Wilson Governments*, p.129.

not share the Labour left's faith in Soviet goodwill, but he also showed no alarm over either the expansion of the USSR's maritime power overseas or the suppression of the Prague Spring.[12] The decision to withdraw British forces from East of Suez and to focus on the defence of Western Europe had more to do with political calculations, notably with regards future membership of the EEC, than on assessments of the Soviet 'threat'.

Braithwaite's comparison between Wilson and Macmillan showed that the Labour government's approach towards East-West relations was fundamentally similar to that of its predecessors. Despite his left-wing past, Wilson retained the British nuclear deterrent and was more emotionally committed to the 'special relationship' with the USA than Heath. British policy towards Communist powers during the first two decades of the Cold War showed distinct characteristics. Firstly, the UK's defence policy involved a close alignment with the USA and membership of NATO, and the British generally presumed NATO's existence and the American military presence in Europe meant that the 'Soviet threat' could be contained without recourse to war. At the same time, the possibility that the US deterrent could be 'decoupled' from the defence of Western Europe was used by successive British governments to justify the UK's status as a nuclear power. Healey used this argument to encourage fellow Ministers to approve further studies towards the upgrading of *Polaris*. Secondly, during successive Cold War crises, London was concerned that excessive American belligerence could provoke

[12] Castle's comment that the Defence Secretary 'seems determined to scotch any reconciliation with Russia' is exaggerated, but is was certainly true that Healey could not be accused of being pro-Soviet. See Castle, *Diaries*, 7.12.65, p.75.

an East-West conflict - this sentiment had manifested itself over Korea, Berlin and Indochina, and was present, albeit in a more muted form, throughout the Vietnam war. Thirdly, the British did not regard political and ideological hostility to be an impediment to trade, and although the American attitude towards East-West commerce was less hostile during the 1960s than before, London and Washington continued to quarrel over the strategic embargo. The problem here, as Gore-Booth later admitted, was that the British tendency to neglect ideology as a factor in international relations affected the UK's assessment of the influence of Communist doctrine on East-West relations.[13] As noted above, the FCO's concept of 'evolution' underestimated the dogmatism and orthodoxy which characterised the Soviet bloc regimes.

Fourthly, British politicians and officials did not subscribe to the Manichean view of the Cold War that was prevalent in Washington during the early Cold War period, and which briefly re-emerged in the 1980s. In his analysis of US-Soviet *détente* in the 1970s, Garthoff identified three schools of thought in American decision-making. The 'essentialists' regarded the USSR as being not only 'inherently expansionist but evil', while the 'mechanists' considered the Soviets to be cautious opportunists who would avoid confrontation with the West. 'Mechanists' presumed that while negotiations on specific issues were feasible, the prospects for a lasting accommodation with the USSR were slim. The 'interactionists', in Garthoff's words, 'tended to find greater diversity in internal Soviet politics and therefore greater potential for the evolution of the Soviet

[13] Gore-Booth, *With Great Truth*, pp.412-419.

system', as well as for the alleviation of East-West tensions through diplomatic contacts with Moscow. British policy towards the USSR can be described as a combination of the 'mechanist' and 'interactionist' schools of thought. George Brown's scorn for any 'goodies and baddies' view of world politics reflected the UK's approach to East-West relations as a whole. British diplomats consistently maintained that the UK, to use Duncan Wilson's words, 'cannot confine [itself] to dealing with governments whose general policies we approve'.[14]

As Gore-Booth noted, the principal problem affecting Britain's relations with Communist states was not the latter's internal policies, but their intention to spread their ideology world-wide. The Foreign Office officials who suggested that IRD propaganda should focus on the repressive nature of the Soviet regime based this proposal on the need to 'educate' the British public about the USSR's internal problems, and to respond in kind to Soviet press attacks highlighting the UK's internal difficulties. There was no intention to actively support Soviet and East European dissidents, or to directly incite revolts behind the Iron Curtain. Like other Western governments, the British took pains not to openly encourage the Czechoslovak reformers during the summer of 1968. Yet after the Prague Spring there was a difference of emphasis between an 'interactionist' Prime Minister and his namesake in Moscow on the one hand, and Stewart and the majority of officials in the FCO. While both Harold and Duncan Wilson believed that the onus for preserving contacts with the USSR lay with Britain, the latter concluded

[14] Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp.1176-1177. Brown made his comment in a Parliamentary debate on 10.7.67, see 750 H.C.Deb5s (HMSO 1967), col.2489. D. Wilson, 'Anglo-Soviet Relations', p.389, p.390.

that it was up to Moscow to show some sense of compromise in its dealings with the Western powers.[15]

In practical terms, the Wilson government had little to show for its efforts to promote *détente*, aside from the Consular Convention (1965) and the Benn-Kirillin technological agreement (1968). Kosygin's visit to Britain in February 1967 was a more amicable affair than Bulganin and Khrushchev's trip the previous decade. Yet Wilson showed far more interest in the appearance of Anglo-Soviet concord - as shown by the 'striking initiatives' in trade he had hoped for in 1967 and 1968, and his continual preoccupation with meeting the Soviet leadership as often as possible - than with the actual results. Wilson could not persuade the Soviets to assist his peace-making initiatives on Vietnam, or to respond to the first West German moves towards *Ostpolitik*. His assumption that Moscow would be interested in NATO and WTO force reductions was shown to be false. Although Wilson and his Ministers paid lip-service to the idea of rallying NATO behind a twin policy of defence and *détente* after March 1966, the Labour government showed far less interest in the proposed Anglo-Czechoslovak 'declaration of principles' than with the problem of offsetting BAOR's costs. While the Harmel exercise (December 1967) reflected the UK's view that *détente* was not incompatible with NATO's collective defence, its endorsement by the Alliance had little to do with British policy. Despite Labour's emphasis on arms control in its 1964 manifesto Brown's attempt to promote preparatory talks towards a CTBT in late 1966 was vetoed by Gromyko, while the conclusion of the NPT two years

[15] SC(67)17, **FCO49/25**(PRO). OPD(68)45, **CAB148/37**(PRO).

later was due principally to agreement between the superpowers. Yet Wilson's brand of 'gesture politics' was not unprecedented, as both Eden and Macmillan tried to persuade public and allied opinion that their respective encounters with the Soviet leadership had yielded practical results.

The fact that arms control had become the exclusive preserve of the superpowers exposed Wilson and Brown's claim that at a time when bilateral contacts between Washington and Moscow had frozen as a result of Vietnam, Britain could serve as an interlocutor between its superpower ally and the USSR. According to David Bendall, the two superpowers 'seem to communicate and understand each other to a greater degree than appearances would suggest'. Both were perplexed by what Walt Rostow subsequently termed 'the diffusion of power', or as Bendall put it, 'the paradox that the continuing growth in their military power and economic resources is not accompanied by a proportionate increase in their political influence and strength', the limitations of both powers having been demonstrated in Vietnam and Czechoslovakia. Bendall concluded that the USA and USSR would deal directly with each other on issues relevant to their bilateral rivalry - notably disarmament and competition in the Third World - and that 'if there is one thing on which [the superpowers] seem mutually agreed it is that there is no place in the game for a referee'.[16] This was applicable not only to Britain, but also to de Gaulle's France, as well as to self-proclaimed spokesmen of the 'non-aligned' world such as India or Yugoslavia.[17]

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[16] White, *Britain (and) Détente*, p.108. Bendall to H. Smith, 5.4.68, **FCO28/14**(PRO).
[17] See the leading article 'World Shortage of Policies' in *The Times*, 12.7.66.

Although Benn, reflecting the views of the Labour left, felt that the lack of progress in Anglo-Soviet relations was due to the UK's dependence on the USA, it is worth noting that de Gaulle likewise achieved little in developing *détente*, despite his anti-American posturing and France's withdrawal from NATO in 1966. The French President's illusion that his country could play a major diplomatic role in a continent unencumbered by ideological and political divisions was shattered by the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The West Germans likewise made no progress with *Ostpolitik* until the early 1970s. Furthermore, despite Johnson's intention to 'build bridges' between the USA and the Eastern bloc, US-Soviet *détente* was delayed as a consequence of Vietnam. Both the Moscow embassy and the Foreign Office concluded in late 1964 that Khrushchev's successors would be more concerned with their rivalry with the Chinese for leadership of the Communist world than with improving relations with the 'capitalist' powers. Sino-Soviet rivalry was a constraint on *détente* until 1969, and it is significant that the USSR was more willing to conclude agreements with the USA and the West Europeans at a time when China was emerging as a major military threat.[18]

The feud with China, the Vietnam war, the GDR's rigidity on the German question and the relative inexperience in foreign affairs of Khrushchev's successors were all constraints on Soviet policy in the 1960s. Yet the Soviets also squandered opportunities to play on intra-Western differences, particularly regarding Anglo-American relations. Given the importance of the 'special relationship' for Britain,

[18] Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp.135-139, pp.274-275. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp.21-23.

particularly its military, nuclear and intelligence aspects, the UK was in no position to cut its ties with the USA. Yet despite the allegations made by Wilson's critics, dependence did not involve submission, and relations between Washington and London were strained by disputes over Vietnam, non-proliferation, the ABM issue and COCOM. The Johnson administration's impatience with foreign criticism of its policy in Vietnam had soured the USA's relations with allied and neutral powers. The furore surrounding the *Sunflower* discussions in February 1967, and Washington's decision seven months later to develop a 'thin' ABM system, reinforced the impression in London that American policy posed obstacles to international agreement, both on arms control and the resolution of the Vietnam war. The Anglo-Soviet technological agreement of January 1968 aroused American criticism, while in Britain many MPs, businessmen and even some officials believed that COCOM was in dire need of reform, if not abolition. A more sensitive and subtle Soviet foreign policy would have exploited these trans-Atlantic tensions over arms control, Vietnam and trade, and would have given individuals like Tony Benn more grounds for arguing that the USSR was a respectable, rational power with whom the UK could co-operate not only in commercial but political relations.

However, Soviet policy towards Britain during this period, especially in 1967-1968, was crude and unsubtle. British officials resented the contemptuous manner with which the USSR treated the UK, in particular Moscow's off-hand dismissal of the proposed Anglo-Soviet 'friendship treaty'. The East of Suez

withdrawals and the devaluation of the pound had certainly highlighted the limitations of British power and influence, but London did not appreciate either the portrayal of the UK's weaknesses by Soviet propaganda, or Gromyko's statement that a 'friendship treaty' was incompatible with Britain's NATO membership (officials were also incensed by the fact that Gromyko implicitly compared the UK with minor states like Denmark and Norway !). After this offhand treatment, Operation *Foot* appeared to be an example of paying off old scores. As far as the British were concerned, the purpose of the 'treaty of friendship' was to establish a framework for increased cultural, scientific and commercial relations. Yet Andropov's report to Brezhnev, cited above, showed the Soviet leadership's complete antipathy to unrestricted East-West contacts. 'Bridge-building' was seen by Moscow a means of subverting the Communist system, and the Foreign Office's intention, expressed in the OPD paper *Relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, of highlighting the KGB's activities within the USSR would have served only to reinforce Andropov's paranoia. The demise of the 'treaty of friendship' in early 1968 showed that due to the Soviet leadership's determination to limit contacts between its subjects and the outside world (imitated by the East European regimes), it was impossible for the UK and other Western powers to establish what Braithwaite defined as a 'normal' relationship with the Soviet bloc states.

There was a fundamental distinction between the Eastern bloc's approach to *détente* and that of the West. For the USSR and its East European allies, *détente*

was restricted to governmental contacts, and the principal goal was to preserve the division of Europe into spheres of influence. *Détente* in Europe was not considered by Moscow to be incompatible with what Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov subsequently called the 'revolutionary-imperial paradigm', namely the USSR's efforts to enhance its influence and support the growth of Marxism-Leninism across the globe. The Soviet bloc states also wanted the material benefits of trade with the more prosperous West while isolating their peoples from ideological contamination from the more affluent capitalist world. One unintended consequence of Western efforts to improve contacts with the Eastern bloc regimes was that, contrary to what FCO exponents of 'evolution' argued, the latter intensified repressive measures against their subjects. This was evident not only in the content of Andropov's May 1968 report to Brezhnev, but in the measures the East German leadership took in the early 1970s to strengthen both the *Stasi* (the secret police) and the GDR's border defences.[19] Yet for the Western powers, *détente* was a means of promoting trans-national contacts in order to promote gradual reform behind the Iron Curtain. This was the main assumption behind the Foreign Office's concept of 'evolution', but the WTO invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 demonstrated the Soviet leadership's entrenched hostility to internal change, gradual or otherwise.

In December 1964 Trevelyan informed his superiors that Khrushchev's successors had a stark dilemma to resolve. The USSR's best hopes of overcoming its economic woes were to develop *détente* with the USA and its allies; this

[19] Andropov to Brezhnev, 6.5.68, Garthoff & Knight, pp.211-217. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p.4, pp.51-54.

would not only ease the military burden on the Soviet economy but would also yield benefits in increased trade and access to Western investment and technology. However, contacts with the West would erode the Communist order, as the peoples of the Soviet bloc would become more aware of the contrast between their poverty and Western prosperity. Khrushchev had been unable to resolve the conflict between the revolutionary-imperial paradigm and the USSR's diplomatic and economic need for East-West *détente*, and Trevelyan correctly predicted that the same would be true of Brezhnev and his peers.[20] In retrospect, it was not until after Mikhail Gorbachev became CPSU General Secretary in 1985 that the dilemma Trevelyan observed was resolved. By the time Gorbachev discarded the revolutionary-imperial paradigm and the obstacles to reform within the Soviet bloc, the irony was that the central planning system that Wilson had referred to in his 'white heat' speech was disintegrating. The ambassador to Warsaw's comment in June 1966 that 'the day will come when the whole system will crack and disintegrate' was justified by events in Eastern Europe in 1989, and by the fall of the USSR in 1991.[21]

[20] Zubok & Pleshakov, *Kremlin's Cold War*, p.282. Trevelyan to Gordon-Walker, 2.11.64, **FO371/177671**(PRO).
[21] Clutton to Smith, 7.6.66, **FO371/188510**(PRO).

APPENDIX 1: FOREIGN OFFICE TELEGRAM ON THE UK's RELATIONS WITH EAST EUROPEAN STATES, 1 JUNE 1964.[1]

FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO CERTAIN OF HER MAJESTY'S REPRESENTATIVES.

No.349 Guidance
June 1, 1964

FOREIGN OFFICE AND WHITEHALL DISTRIBUTION

CONFIDENTIAL

Policy - and Information Policy - towards Eastern Europe

Her Majesty's Ambassadors in Eastern Europe attended a conference in London in April to discuss developments in the area. It was agreed that our policy of trying to develop contacts with the East European countries had been right and that there should be opportunities for carrying that policy further because of the effects on Eastern Europe of the Sino-Soviet dispute and the signs of growing independence on the part of some of the East European governments (c.f. Rumania [sic] - my Intel No.67 of May 14).

2. In pursuing a more active policy, we should not expect or try to achieve quick results. We should not try to exacerbate the Sino-Soviet dispute, nor should we appear to be trying to set the governments or peoples of Eastern Europe against the Soviet Union. To do either of these things would be self-defeating and could lead to sharp reactions. We should however treat the East European countries increasingly as independent and show ourselves ready to discuss seriously with them our attitude on major policy questions, even if we have little hope of thereby changing their attitude. We should also encourage personal contacts at many levels, including exchanges of ministerial visits.

3. We should no longer refer to these countries as "satellites" but as East European Governments or countries.

4. The meeting noted our newly agreed policy of liberalising quotas for certain imports from Eastern Europe and although it was recognised that it was too soon to tell how much difference this would make to the level of trade it was agreed that it was a useful move since it brought trade with the East European countries to a more normal basis.

5. The meeting agreed that with the cessation of jamming the BBC was our most effective instrument for influencing information in the area.

6. You may draw on the foregoing in conversation with friendly governments and colleagues, and you should be guided by it in your general information activities.

[1] FO to Missions, No.349 Guidance, 1.6.64, N1051/21, **FO371/177410**(PRO).

APPENDIX 2: DRAFT DECLARATION OF 'PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSALS GOVERNING EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND RELATIONS', 1 JULY 1966.[2]

Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom believe that the stability, security and prosperity of Europe are essential to the stability, security and prosperity of the whole world. They recognise that there exist differences in political belief; that there are difficulties in political relations which have not yet been resolved; and that there is disagreement about the means of achieving a final European settlement. Nevertheless, they call on all European states to accept that their peoples share a broad European tradition; and that it can only be to their advantage to build upon shared experiences and to recognise common interests. The peoples of Europe have, not least, a common interest in survival.

2. The prosperity of Europe requires the European states to cooperate bilaterally and collectively in furthering their mutual interests in economic, social and cultural matters. Her Majesty's Government believe that there is today among the peoples of Europe a greater understanding than before of the need to overcome the barriers impeding cooperation between them. It is the duty of all European Governments to respond to this.

3. In accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, security in Europe requires that the relations between states should be founded on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; on equal rights and non-interference in the internal affairs of others; and on the duty to refrain from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. Any disputes and difficulties which arise must therefore be settled by peaceful and cooperative measures.

4. The stability of Europe requires the settlement of the German problem and other matters outstanding from the Second World War. Part of this settlement must be the final determination of frontiers with due regard to existing agreements in accordance with justice, reality and the wishes of the peoples concerned. It is clear that the process of reaching a final settlement will take some time. But in the meantime progress must be made where progress is possible.

5. To this end, Her Majesty's Government propose that in formulating their policies towards each other all governments concerned with the peace and prosperity of Europe should be guided by the following principles:-

(i) Limited agreements should be sought in areas where the common interest is clear, in order to prepare the way for more far-reaching accords.

(ii) In the interests of mutual understanding, the present trend towards wider contacts between Eastern and Western Europe is to be welcomed and should be encouraged by governments at the political, professional and personal levels.

(iii) All economically advanced countries, whatever their political structure, should recognise a common responsibility to cooperate in helping to

[2] OPD(66)76, *East/West Relations. A Declaration*, note by Foreign Office, 1.7.66, **CAB148/28**(PRO). Emphasis as in original.

solve the fundamental problems which confront the developing countries of the world.

(iv) Each state with an interest in European security should be prepared to exchange an understanding with any or every other state that it renounces the use of force as a means of settling any dispute which may exist or arise between them.

(v) Similarly, the aggravation of international tension should never be used as an instrument of national policy.

(vi) European states should re-affirm their desire for progress on measures of arms control and disarmament, with general and complete disarmament under effective international control as the final objective.

6. Her Majesty's Government declare their intention to be guided by these principles and their willingness to exchange declarations as proposed above with any or all of the states of Europe. They will seek to extend their scientific, technical and cultural cooperation with any European state willing in this manner to help realise individually and in partnership each country's human and material potential. They will also seek to promote the best possible commercial and economic relations with all European states. [In particular, they will be ready to consider the establishment on a bilateral basis of Joint Economic Committees with regular meetings, of the kind which already exist between Britain and certain of her close associates in Western Europe].

(Note: The passage in square brackets raises practical problems which will require further consideration).

APPENDIX 3: DRAFT 'TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND PEACEFUL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS', APRIL 1967.[3]

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth, and the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

Desiring to strengthen the bonds of friendship and to extend all mutually advantageous forms of peaceful co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

Being convinced that the further development of their relations will enable them to co-operate more effectively in securing the relaxation of tension, in strengthening peace and security and in seeking the just settlement of outstanding international problems;

Noting that the friendly ties between their respective countries have already found expression in exchanges of visits between their respective Ministers and specialists, and in the conclusion of agreements on trade, on agricultural research, on consular relations, on air services and on relations in the scientific, technological, educational and cultural fields;

Affirming their common interest in raising living standards and in promoting the development of science and technology in their respective countries through the expansion of trade and of scientific and technical exchanges;

Considering that the common interests of their countries as major shipping nations will be best served by the development of international navigation on the basis of the principles of the freedom of merchant shipping;

Aiming to broaden and increase the exchanges which already take place between their respective countries in the fields of education and culture;

Seeking to foster greater understanding by facilitating the exchange of information between their respective countries and by encouraging personal contacts between their respective nationals;

Have decided to conclude a Treaty of Friendship and Peaceful Co-operation and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries for this purpose:

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth (hereinafter referred to as "Her Britannic Majesty"):

For the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

.....

.....

The Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

.....

.....

Who, having communicated to each other their respective full powers, which were found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

---

[3] Annex to OPD(67)25, *Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Peaceful Co-operation*, 4.4.67, **CAB148/31**(PRO).

Article I

In all matters affecting their mutual relations the High Contracting Parties will be guided by the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

Article II

Ministers and other senior representatives of the High Contracting Parties will meet regularly to exchange views and to co-ordinate action on the various aspects of their bilateral relations.

Article III

(1) The High Contracting Parties will consult at regular intervals and will adopt all measures which are to their mutual advantage to facilitate the expansion of trade. They will seek to identify and overcome those obstacles to closer economic co-operation which arise from differences in their economic systems.

(2) They will continue their efforts to develop effective working relationships in pursuing their maritime interests and will seek to co-ordinate their policies on shipping questions. They will co-operate in the development of civil aviation, including the expansion of air services between and beyond the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, and in matters affecting communications.

(3) They will promote the exchange of technological information by encouraging the conclusion of appropriate agreements between the responsible bodies in their respective countries.

Article IV

(1) With a view to laying a broad foundation for mutual understanding between their respective countries and peoples the High Contracting Parties will encourage the development of conditions favouring the expansion of cultural, educational and scientific exchanges, tourism by both groups and individuals, and the free dissemination in the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union respectively of all books, newspapers and other publications originating in the other country.

(2) They will promote the exchange of cinematograph, radio and television programmes.

(3) Through the Consultative Committee which they have established they will seek further means to expand and improve contacts in the spheres of culture, education, science and sport.

Article V

In order to promote the amicable settlement of problems which may arise from differences in the respective legal and administrative systems of the High Contracting Parties, each High Contracting Party will make available information which the other High Contracting Party may request regarding its laws and regulations.

Article VI

The High Contracting Parties will seek to promote arrangements whereby persons who enjoy the benefits of the health services and pensions schemes operating in the

United Kingdom or the Soviet Union, as the case may be, may qualify for the benefits of the health services and pensions schemes operating in the other country when they reside there temporarily or permanently.

Article VII

It is understood that nothing in this Treaty shall in any way detract from the existing obligations of either High Contracting Party.

Article VIII

This Treaty shall be ratified and shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the exchange of instruments or ratification which shall take place in ..... as soon as possible.

Article IX

This Treaty shall be reviewed by the High Contracting Parties every five years in order that they may consider what additions or amendments should be made to it to accord with the continuing development of relations and the growth of friendship and co-operation between their respective countries.

In witness thereof, the Plenipotentiaries of both High Contracting Parties have signed the present Treaty and affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate at ..... this ..... day of ....., 1967, in the English and Russian languages, both texts being equally authoritative.

For Her Britannic Majesty:

For the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

APPENDIX 4: TRANSLATION OF THE SOVIET DRAFT 'TREATY ON THE COOPERATION IN EUROPEAN SECURITY QUESTIONS AND ON FOREIGN POLICY CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS AND THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND'.[4]

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Her Majesty The Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,

Desirous to contribute to the development of cooperation on an all-European basis and to safeguarding of peace and security in Europe in the interests of prosperity and well-being of its peoples;

Mindful of the joint struggle and alliance of the two countries in the years of World War II and conscious of the common interests in averting a new war in Europe;

Recognizing that the strengthening and development by all possible means of such cooperation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom correspond to the interests of the peoples of the two countries as well as to the interests of international peace;

Guided by the Charter of the United Nations;

Have decided to conclude this treaty and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries for this purpose:

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics .....

Her Majesty The Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

Who having communicated to each other their respective full powers, which were found in good and due form, have agreed as follows.

Article 1

The High Contracting Parties shall cooperate in establishing an effective system of European security and in the implementation of this purpose of measures designed to prevent an armed conflict in Europe and to strengthen the peace in this continent on the basis of the principles of respect for sovereignty, equality, non-interference in the internal affairs, recognition of the inviolability of the borders obtained after World War II of all European States, including the border between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, and renunciation of the threat or use of force between them.

Article 2

Each of the High Contracting Parties shall not undertake any actions or steps which would directly or indirectly impair the friendly relations between the Contracting Parties.

Each of the Parties shall also refrain from the participation in any actions or steps by third countries or groups of States which would directly or indirectly be taken against the other Contracting Party.

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[4] H. Smith (ND) to P. Hayman, 30.1.68, **FCO28/380**(PRO).

Article 3

The High Contracting Parties will engage in regular exchanges of opinions and consultations on questions of ensuring European security and other foreign policy problems of mutual concern. To this end, the designated representatives of the Parties will meet periodically.

Article 4

With a view to contributing to the development of friendly relations between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and to the strengthening of peace in Europe, the High Contracting Parties shall promote in all possible ways the economic and trade relations between the two States on the basis of the principles of equality and mutual benefit, and shall take measures to eliminate obstacles to closer economic cooperation.

For the same purposes, the Parties will develop scientific, technological and cultural cooperation between the two States and promote exchanges in the field (sic) of education, public health, tourism and sports.

Article 5

The provisions of this Treaty shall not affect the rights and commitments of the High Contracting Parties under their agreements in force.

Article 6

This Treaty shall be applicable:

a) as regards the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics - to the territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

b) as regards Her Britannic Majesty - to the territory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Article 7

This Treaty is subject to ratification and shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the exchange of the instruments of ratification on which it is to be held in the near future in .....

Article 8

The High Contracting Parties shall every five years consider the question of what additions or amendments are to be introduced into this Treaty in the light of progress made in consolidating cooperation and developing relations between the two countries.

In witness whereof, the respective Plenipotentiaries of the two High Contracting Parties have signed this Treaty and affixed thereto their seals.

Done, in duplicate, at ....., this ..... day of ....., 196..., each in the Russian and English languages, both texts being equally authoritative.

For the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

For Her Britannic Majesty:

APPENDIX 5: SOVIET AND OTHER WARSAW PACT CONVENTIONAL FORCES LOCATED IN CENTRAL EUROPE OR NEAR THE NATO AREA, JANUARY 1967-AUGUST 1968.[5]

(a) Deployment of Soviet divisions in the Western USSR and Eastern Europe.

	Tank	Motor-rifle I & II	Motor-rifle III	Airborne	Total
GDR	10	10	-	-	20
Poland	2	-	-	-	2
Hungary	2	2	-	-	4
Western USSR	16	16	7	3	42
Leningrad MD	1	5	3	1	10
South-West USSR	4	5	6	-	15
Southern USSR	3	12	11	2	28
	38	50	27	6	121

All airborne divisions and divisions in Eastern Europe are Category I. Tank divisions are either Category I or II. With the motor-rifle (mechanised infantry) divisions Category I and II divisions are grouped together, but an estimated two-thirds are Category I (i.e. minimum of 85% of its strength). Category II divisions have up to 60% of their strength, while Category III divisions are cadre formations ready to receive reservists in wartime.

Western USSR includes the Baltic, Belorussian, Moscow and Carpathian Military Districts (MDs). *South-West USSR* incorporates the Kiev and Odessa MDs, while *Southern USSR* includes the North Caucasus, Transcaucasus and Turkestan MDs. The two Far Eastern MDs had a total of 13 Category I and II divisions (8 tank, 4 motor-rifle and 1 airborne), and 4 Category III motor-rifle divisions. One motor-rifle division was stationed in Mongolia. The three central MDs (Volga, Siberian and Urals) had 8 divisions, 6 of which were Category III.

(b) Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact ground forces divisional strengths (November 1966).

Country	Tank	M-r (1)	M-r (2)	Airborne	Total
Bulgaria	4	7	1	-	12
Czechoslovakia	5	6	3	-	14[6]
GDR	2	4	-	-	6
Hungary	1	4	1	-	6
Poland	5	7[7]	2	1	15
Romania	2	6	1	-	9
	19	34	8	1	62

[5] All figures are taken from JIC(67)3, *Soviet Bloc War Potential, 1967-71*, 16.2.67, **CAB158/65**(PRO); JIC(68)1, *Periodic Intelligence Summary for NATO Commands*, 1.6.68; & JIC(68)3, *Soviet Bloc War Potential, 1968-72*, 24.2.68, **CAB158/68**(PRO).

[6] In addition to these 14 divisions, the Czechoslovaks had 2 airborne brigades.

[7] One of these divisions was a naval infantry (marine) formation.

Albania was nominally a member of the Warsaw Pact until 1968, although following the rupture in relations between Moscow and Tirana in 1961 the Albanians ceased military co-operation with the USSR. Albania's 6 brigade-strong army was considered by the JIC to be in a poor state of readiness.

M-r (1) indicates motor-rifle divisions classed as being in a high state of readiness. **M-r (2)** indicates motor-rifle divisions in a low state of readiness.

The respective figures given for the army of each Warsaw Pact state are as follows: *Bulgaria*, 125,000; *Czechoslovakia*, 175,000; *German Democratic Republic*, 90,000; *Hungary*, 95,000; *Poland*, 185,000; and *Romania*, 150,000.

(c) Estimated Soviet tactical air force strength in Eastern Europe and the Western USSR, mid-1968.

Country / MD	Fighters	Light-bombers	Reconnaissance	Helicopters	Total
GDR	590	80	60	50	780
Poland	240	-	30	30	300
Hungary	150	50	-	25	225
Leningrad	85	20	10	10	125
Carpathian	250	45	20	90	405
Baltic	170	20	20	90	300
Belorussian	215	-	20	30	265
Moscow	85	-	25	45	155
Volga	-	-	-	-	-
Odessa	150	-	30	20	200
Kiev	75	-	-	40	115
North Caucasus	-	-	-	-	-
Transcaucasus	165	15	25	50	255
	2175	230	240	490	3135

Fighters include both interceptors and ground attack aircraft. The figures given in the JIC estimates do not give any indication as to which of these aircraft were recently introduced, and which are obsolete. By comparison, the MDs facing China (Turkestan and Far-Eastern) had a total of 495 aircraft (340 fighters, 15 light bombers, 20 reconnaissance 'planes and 120 helicopters).

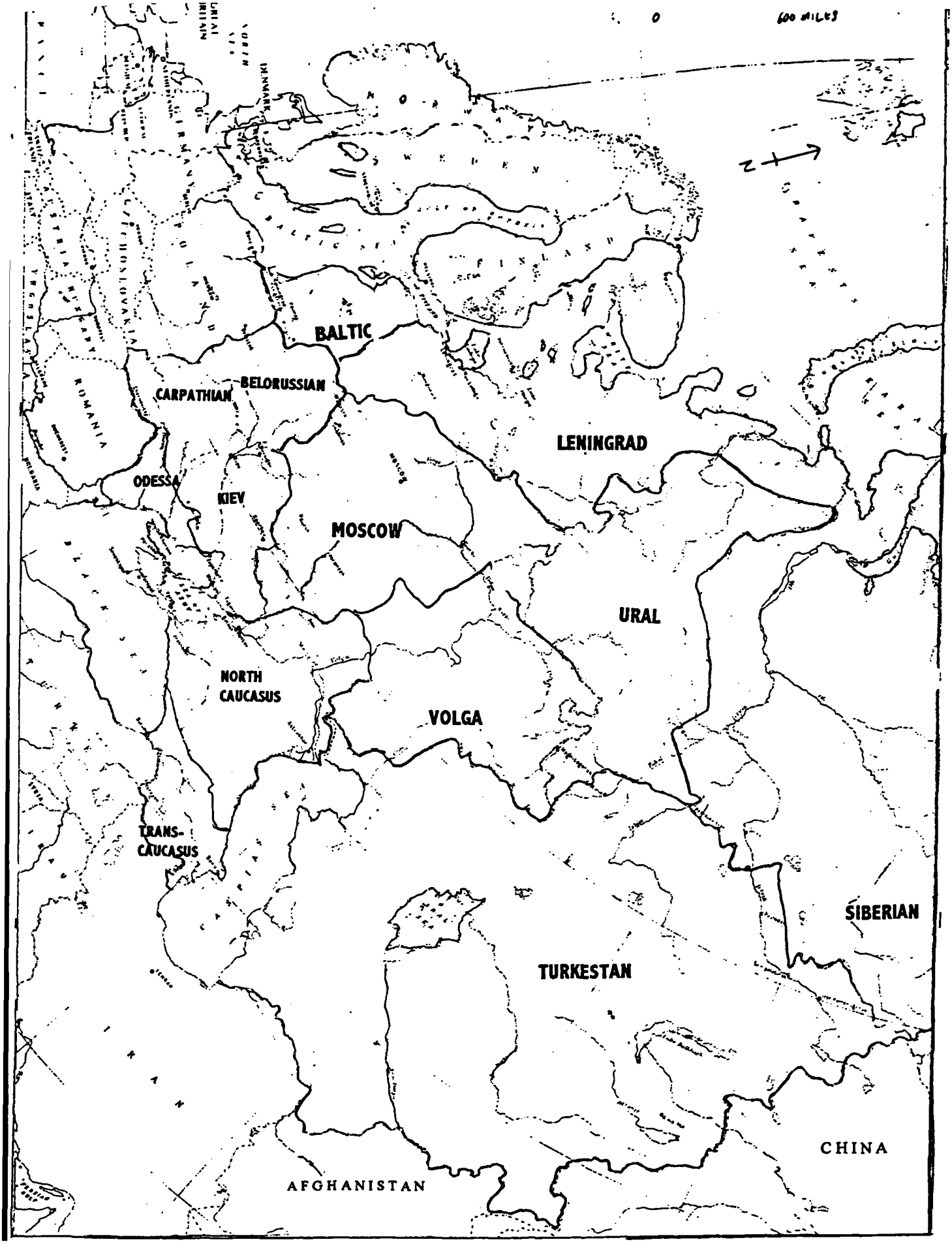
(d) Estimated strengths for Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact tactical air power (excluding Albania), mid-1968.

Country	Fighters	Light-bombers	Reconnaissance	Helicopters	Total
Bulgaria	270	-	10	50	330
Czechoslovakia	515	-	40	130	685
GDR	300	-	-	25	325
Hungary	140	-	-	15	155
Poland	720	40	20	10	790
Romania	230	-	10	10	250
	2175	40	80	240	2535

According to JIC estimates, Albania's air-force was thought to consist of 75 fighters and 5 helicopters, and was classed as a token force with 'no operational capability'.

Of the non-Soviet WTO air forces, those of Czechoslovakia and East Germany were rated the best in terms of training and material. While the Polish air force was the largest, it was still undergoing modernisation.

MAP A: CENTRAL EUROPEAN BOUNDARIES, 1949-1989.



Maps A and B are taken from JIC(67)3, *Soviet Bloc War Potential, 1967-71*, 16.2.67, CAB158/65(PRO).

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CAB129: Cabinet Office. Cabinet memoranda.
CAB130: Cabinet Office. Committee files.
CAB133: Cabinet Office. Commonwealth & International meetings.
CAB134: Cabinet Office. Subject files.
CAB148: Overseas Policy and Defence Committee (Ministerial and Official) files.
CAB158: Joint Intelligence Committee memoranda.
CAB159: Joint Intelligence Committee minutes.
CAB164: Cabinet Office. Subject files.
CAB165: Cabinet Office. Committee files.
DEFE4: Chiefs of Staff Committee minutes.
DEFE5: Chiefs of Staff Committee memoranda.
DEFE6: Joint Planning Staff Papers.
DEFE13: Ministry of Defence Private Office Papers.
FCO7: Foreign & Commonwealth Office. American Department.
FCO15: Foreign & Commonwealth Office. South-East Asia Department.
FCO17: Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Eastern Department.
FCO18: Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Far Eastern Department.
FCO28: Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Northern Department / East European & Soviet Department.
FCO45: Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Defence Department.
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00,000 OR 63.13 MILES TO 1 INCH
50 100 150 MILES

MAP A: CENTRAL EUROPEAN BOUNDARIES, 1949-1989.

N

DENMARK
COPENHAGEN
Malmö
BORNHOLM (DENMARK)
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Gdansk
Lübeck
Wilhelmshaven
Hamburg
Szczecin
Bydgoszcz
Bremen
Groningen
NETHERLANDS
Amsterdam
THE HAGUE
Rotterdam
Hannover
Steten
BERLIN
Poznan
Oder
POLAND
Magdeburg
Warsaw
Siedlce
Brest
Lodz
Lublin
Vistula
Wloclawek
Dortmund
Duisburg
Essen
Düsseldorf
Köln
Aachen
BONN
Rhine
Antwerp
BRUSSELS
BELGIUM
Liège
Kassel
Elbe
Erfurt
Weimar
Dresden
Legnica
Wroclaw
Koblenz
Frankfurt
LUXEMBOURG
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY
PRAGUE
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Plzen
Ostrava
Olomouc
Brno
Krakow
Tarnow
San
Lvov
Metz
Saarbrücken
Stuttgart
Strasbourg
FRANCE
Danube
München
Linz
VIENNA
Bratislava
Kosice
Uzhgorod
Mukachevo
Miskolc
Debrecen
Dijon
Basel
Zurich
BUDAPEST
ROMANIA
BERNE
SWITZERLAND
LIECHTENSTEIN
Innsbruck
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
Arad